

Title: Organization of Two Death Cafes: A Collaboration between COMPASS Ghana and Lancaster Medical School Students

Introduction:

Death Cafes provide a unique opportunity for individuals to come together and engage in open discussions about death, dying, and end-of-life experiences. This article focuses on the organisation of two Death Cafes, held on 23rd March and 5th May 2023, by the students at Lancaster Medical School in collaboration with COMPASS Ghana. These events aimed to create a safe and supportive environment for people to share their thoughts, fears, and questions about mortality while promoting awareness and understanding of death-related issues.

Setting the Context:

Lancaster Medical School students, known for their commitment to community engagement and holistic healthcare, recognised the importance of facilitating open conversations around death. In collaboration with COMPASS Ghana, a charity dedicated to improving palliative and end-of-life care and support, the students organised two Death Cafes in Lancaster, UK. These events were designed to bring together individuals from diverse backgrounds and create a space for respectful dialogue.

Attendance:

Both Death Cafes attracted a diverse range of attendees, including students, healthcare professionals, community members, and individuals with personal experiences related to death and bereavement. 35 people attended the first death café, and 40 people attending the second death café. The CEO of COMPASS Ghana Dr Yakubu Salifu, who is also a lecturer at the Division of Health Research shared his experience at the event.

Through effective promotion and outreach efforts, the organisers ensured a broad representation of age groups, cultural backgrounds, and professional affiliations. The inclusive nature of the events encouraged attendees to share their perspectives, stories, and questions without fear of judgment.

Event Organisation:

The Lancaster Medical School students, along with COMPASS Ghana, meticulously planned and executed the Death Cafes. They secured a suitable venue that offered a warm and welcoming atmosphere conducive to meaningful conversations. The organisers arranged for comfortable seating, refreshments, and appropriate referral system should any participant need support.

Each Death Cafe began with a brief introduction to the concept and purpose of the event. Attendees were then divided into smaller groups, facilitating intimate discussions led by trained facilitators. These facilitators created a safe environment, ensuring respectful and open dialogue among participants. Thought-provoking prompts and questions were provided to stimulate conversations

around topics such as grief, spirituality, cultural practices, and the role of healthcare professionals in end-of-life care.

Outcome:

The Death Cafes successfully fulfilled their objectives. Attendees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to engage in open conversations about death, a topic often considered taboo in society. The supportive atmosphere enabled individuals to share their personal stories, fears, and hopes, fostering a sense of connection and empathy among participants.

The events facilitated the exchange of diverse perspectives and knowledge related to death and dying. Participants gained a deeper understanding of the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the end-of-life journey. Attendees also appreciated the insights shared by healthcare professionals, gaining valuable information about available resources and support networks.

Moreover, the Death Cafes initiated ongoing conversations about death and end-of-life care within the community. Participants left the events feeling more empowered to have conversations about death with their loved ones and to make informed decisions regarding advance care planning.

One participant recounted:

“When people plan their death, they usually think about the financial needs of the dependents. We hardly think about their emotional needs and their coping. We need to have a relook”

Conclusion:

The collaboration between Lancaster Medical School students and COMPASS Ghana resulted in the successful organisation of two Death Cafes that provided a safe and inclusive space for discussing death and dying. These events encouraged attendees to explore their own perspectives, confront their fears, and enhance their understanding of death-related issues. By fostering open conversations, the Death Cafes played a crucial role in promoting awareness, empathy, and informed decision-making regarding end-of-life experiences. The impact of these events extended beyond their immediate duration, sparking ongoing discussions and transforming attitudes towards death in the community.

Appreciation:

We express our heartfelt appreciation to the Faculty of Health and Medicine Staff Engagement fund for their generous funding (awarded to Dr Yakubu Salifu, Lecturer in Palliative Care), enabling the successful organisation of the Death Cafes. We extend our gratitude to Lancaster Medical School COMPASS Ghana society executives for their dedicated efforts in planning and executing these impactful events.

TEA, COFFEE AND LOADS OF
FOOD!!!

23RD MARCH, 2023

12 PM ONWARDS

FOYER A FLOOR

HEALTH INNOVATION CAMPUS

(A13 HIO)

A SAFE AND OPEN SPACE
TO TALK ABOUT DEATH AND DYING

#hmmengagement

DEATH CAFE



HOSTED BY
LANCS MED COMPASS GHANA SOCIETY

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