



Trainee & Program Details

Training Program

Palliative Medicine (Paediatrics & Child Health) 2026

Training Program Phase *

Specialty Foundation Phase

Date of Learning*

18/5/2026

Learning Capture Details

Type of Learning *

Personal reflection

Title*

Family care disagreements and non-pharmacological symptom management

Select the primary learning goal *

End-of-life and after-death care

Learning Capture Details

Description of Activity *

I recently led a difficult and complex family discussion regarding end-of-life symptom management and care decision making for a 10-year-old child. One parent advocated to prolong life and could not recognise or was unwilling to accept that the patient was experiencing an acute deterioration. The other parent was more accepting of the limitations of treatment and wanted to update the advance care plan and access non-pharmacological symptom management to ease the patients' symptoms. This conversation was challenging and emotionally charged which hindered my ability to clearly communicate the clinical outcomes and disease progression the patient and their family can expect.

What did you learn? *

I learnt that these discussions are really hard for everyone involved. Great care and equal consideration must be given to all parties regardless of whether or not clinical reasoning is being appropriately applied. I learnt a lot from watching the senior specialist and nurse using effective de-escalation tactics, including using empathy and validation, to manage the conversation when it became out of control.

I also learnt the importance of non-pharmacological therapies to both patients and their families to help manage symptoms, especially when a patient faces acute deterioration. I feel I have a lot to learn about the potential value of these therapies especially as it relates to pain management, grief and spiritual, emotional and cultural impacts on a patients' progression.

How will you apply this learning in the future? *

In the future I will be sure to apply some of the de-escalation tactics to any similar conversations that I may be a part of. I will also apply my increased knowledge of non-pharmacological therapies as supportive options to advance care planning and acknowledge the value of and importance to patients and families of these therapies within the context of the end-of-life process.

Assessor Feedback (optional)

Feedback From *

Dr Lancelot Vamben

Assessor Role *

Rotation Supervisor

Personal Message

Dear Dr Vamben

Can you please review my Learning Capture and provide feedback on my personal reflection, I would really appreciate your insights.

Kind regards

Patrick

Feedback Requested Date

18/5/2026

Feedback *

I was present at the difficult family discussion that Dr Santos describes. It was a challenging conversation that required careful and considered management as many differing opinions, priorities and levels of understanding were present. Reading Dr Santos's reflection I agree with his assessment of this conversation and am heartened to read that he has found it to be a rich learning experience. His reflection the non-pharmacological therapies is a good insight into what he is yet to learn. I am available to discuss these therapies and also the de-escalation tactics with Dr Santos when required. I look forward to seeing him continue to grow his knowledge and practice in these areas.