

# Palliative Care Education for Surgical Residents: Current Practices and Constraints

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## Background

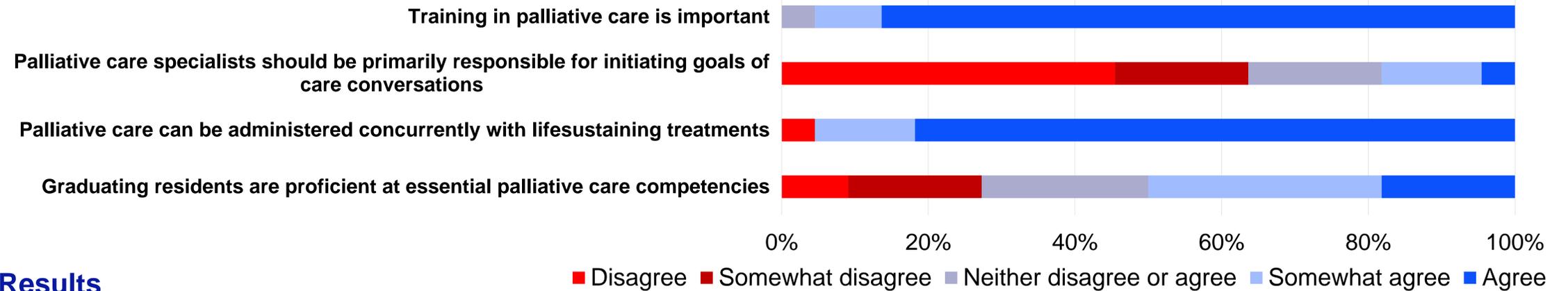
- Palliative Care (PC) education is important for surgeons and surgical residents, yet variable
- American College of Surgeon's PC "Resident's Guide" was published in 2009 and is 278 pages long
  - Impractical length and unknown utilization
- Addition of "Palliative and Hospice Care" to SCORE<sup>®</sup> curriculum module in 2019 demonstrates PC's increasing role in surgical education.
- PC topics include:
  - Disease trajectories & cancer syndromes
  - Prognosis and treatment options
  - Nutrition and hydration
  - Pain and non-pain symptoms
  - Hospice
  - Opioid prescribing

## Objective

- To describe current educational experience regarding palliative care in surgical training
- To identify barriers to and opportunities for PC education for general surgery residents

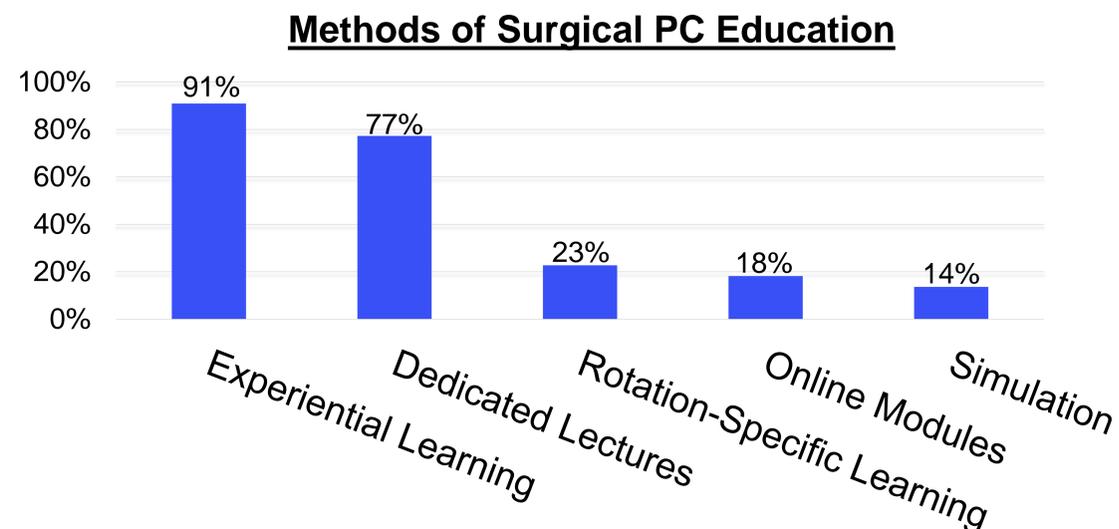
## Methods

- Survey of general surgery program directors (PDs) via the Association of Program Directors in Surgery



## Results

- 22 program directors responded
- Average protected educational time = 3 hours/week (range 1-9)
- Average PC Curriculum = 2 hours/year (range 0-8)
- Max. possible PC education time = **4 hours/year** (range 1-10)
- **17/22 PDs support more time for PC education**
- Barriers to increase quantity / quality of PC education:
  - Difficulty adapting resident educational time (37%)
  - Lack of awareness of existing SCORE<sup>®</sup> PC curriculum (32%)
  - Lack of faculty expertise in PC principles (32%)



## Discussion

- Among this small sample, PDs noted:
  - **Importance of palliative care education**
  - Potential to **increase PC training to 4 hours/year**
- One third of PDs incorrectly believed PC was not in SCORE
- Varied barriers to improved education

## Conclusion

- Need to develop a modern, practical palliative care education toolkit
  - 3-4 hours maximum
  - Adaptable to program's educational format
  - Able to supplement SCORE<sup>®</sup> curriculum
  - Includes faculty training or incorporates local PC experts

