

## Educational Interventions to Improve Readiness for Serious Illness and End-of-Life Care

**Felix Ley, MD**

College of Medicine, Florida International University, Miami, Florida

**Joel Collazo, MD**

College of Medicine, Florida International University, Miami, Florida

**Carlos Vazquez Rincon, MD**

College of Medicine, Florida International University, Miami, Florida

**Dayne Alonso, PA-C**

College of Medicine, Florida International University, Miami, Florida

**Juan De Llano, MD**

College of Medicine, Florida International University, Miami, Florida

### Abstract

Health professionals frequently report feeling underprepared to conduct serious illness and end-of-life (EOL) conversations, despite the importance of these skills for patient dignity and clinician well-being. This systematic review examined the effectiveness of educational interventions designed to prepare health professional learners for EOL communication. Using a PRISMA-guided approach, we synthesized findings from 30 peer-reviewed studies published between 2010 and 2025 involving learners in medicine, nursing, and allied health disciplines. Educational outcomes related to confidence, communication skills, empathy, and readiness were analyzed using thematic synthesis.

Simulation-based and multimodal educational approaches demonstrated the strongest and most consistent benefits. Programs that combined brief didactic teaching with simulation and structured reflection produced substantial improvements in learner confidence, comfort with EOL discussions, and self-efficacy. In contrast, lecture-only interventions showed limited impact on communication behaviors. Effective curricula were commonly introduced early in training, incorporated interprofessional learning, and included guided emotional debriefing to support empathy and resilience.

Key limitations across studies included heterogeneous outcome measures, short follow-up periods, and limited geographic diversity. Overall, the findings support integrating simulation-based, multimodal EOL education as a core component of health professions curricula. Such approaches may enhance learner readiness, promote compassionate care, and better prepare clinicians to meet the complex communication demands of serious illness and end-of-life care.

