

DEATH ANXIETY, COPING STRATEGIES, AND EMPATHY AMONG THAI PHYSICIANS IN CHIANG MAI

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Abstract: This study investigates the relationship of years of experience and death anxiety to the empathy of Thai physicians in Chiang Mai toward their patients, as mediated by coping strategies (engaged, disengaged, and both). A total of 143 physicians (ages of 25 and 75) from four hospitals in Chiang Mai, who completed a self-administered questionnaire that was designed to measure the study's variables, namely demography, death anxiety, coping strategy, and empathy. The results of the study indicate that the years of experience of Chiang Mai's physicians directly and significantly relate to their reported level of death anxiety and empathy. Meanwhile, death anxiety is indirectly related to empathy when mediated by coping strategies. The results also reveal that physicians with a higher level of death anxiety tended to employ disengagement and coping strategies. Lastly, physicians who utilized all types of coping strategies reported higher levels of empathy toward their patients. These findings suggest that as Thai physicians in Chiang Mai become more anxious about death and feel more empathy toward their patients as they gain professional experience. While contending with death anxiety, they are more apt to employ disengagement or coping strategies; however, an engaged coping strategy is more likely to promote empathy in comparison to other strategies. The implications of these findings may assist physicians in further understanding death anxiety and identifying the most strategy to cope and generate empathy toward their patients.

Key Words: death Anxiety, coping strategies, empathy

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