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Teaching Palliative Care to Medical Students: Developing a Research Agenda

By Dr Tom Weetman

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Ground Rules

- Please see this as a discussion
- I would really like to hear your thoughts and ideas.
Either:
 - 'Raise your hand' or
 - Use the chat
- Please can everyone mute their microphone

Questions for the session

- 1. Which idea do you think is the most intriguing?
- 2. What aspect of that idea do you feel requires particular attention?

Background

- Palliative Care is a core competency for all doctors¹
- Most hospital Palliative Care is not provided by Palliative Care specialists
- End of life care can be distressing for medical students, in practice and in theory^{2,3}

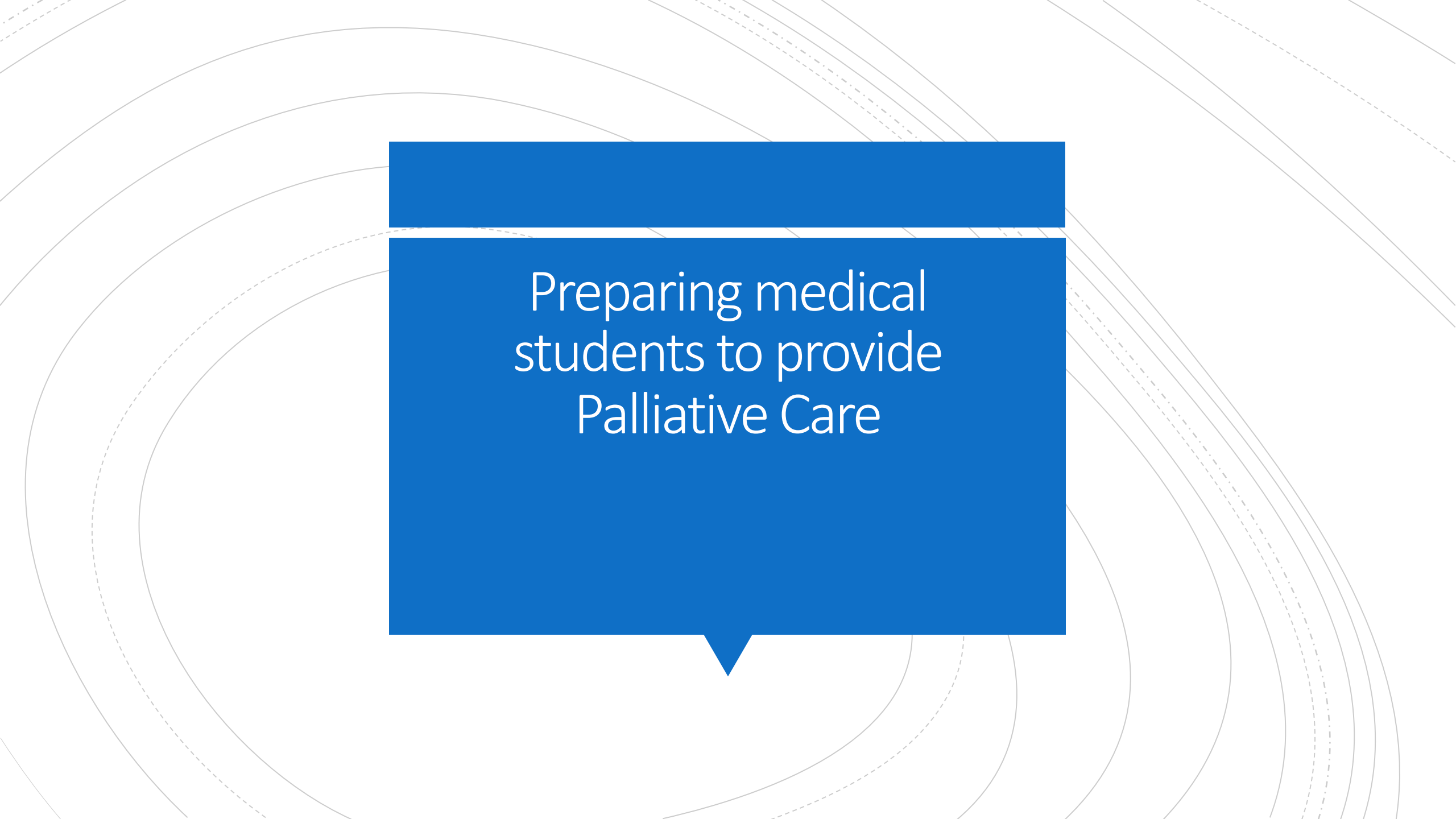
1. Outcomes for Graduates. General Medical Council.

2. Thiemann, Pia, et al. "20 Negative personal emotional impact of caring for the dying-expectations of future doctors. a multicentre study." *BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care* 8 (2018): A8.

3. Ho, C.Y., Kow, C.S., Chia, C.H.J. et al. The impact of death and dying on the personhood of medical students: a systematic scoping review. *BMC Med Educ* 20, 516 (2020).

Areas of interest

- **Preparing medical students to provide Palliative Care**
- **Uncertainty and cognitive dissonance**
- **Supporting medical students to support themselves**

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Preparing medical
students to provide
Palliative Care

Preparing medical students to provide Palliative Care Context

- Junior doctors do not feel adequately prepared to care for patients with palliative and end of life care needs⁴
- Highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic⁵

4. Bharmal, Aamena, et al. "Palliative and end-of-life care and junior doctors': a systematic review and narrative synthesis." *BMJ supportive & palliative care* (2019).

5. Raniolo, Georgia, Callum O'Keeffe, and Osama Ali Omrani. "Transparency about death: students on COVID-19." *The Clinical Teacher* 17.4 (2020): 447-449.

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Preparing medical students to provide Palliative Care Ideas

- **Work with medical students and foundation year doctors**
 - What do they feel are the barriers to Palliative Care learning?
 - What are the areas of omission or least confidence?

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Uncertainty and Cognitive Dissonance

Uncertainty and Cognitive Dissonance Context

- **Uncertainty is mentioned three times in the General Medical Council's *Outcomes for Graduates 2018*⁶**
- **Most patients and advocates want to discuss uncertain prognosis^{7,8}**
- **Cognitive dissonance is a likely consequence of uncertainty, for both the patient and doctor**

6. General Medical Council. *Outcomes for Graduates*. 2018.

7. Krawczyk, M., Gallagher, R. Communicating prognostic uncertainty in potential end-of-life contexts: experiences of family members. *BMC Palliat Care* **15**, 59 (2016)

8. Evans, Leah R., et al. "Surrogate decision-makers' perspectives on discussing prognosis in the face of uncertainty." *American journal of respiratory and critical care medicine* 179.1 (2009): 48-53.

9. LeBlanc, Thomas W., Jennifer S. Temel, and Paul R. Helft. "'How much time do I have?': communicating prognosis in the era of exceptional responders." *American Society of Clinical Oncology Educational Book* 38 (2018): 787-794.

Uncertainty and Cognitive Dissonance Ideas

- How can we better prepare medical students to communicate an uncertain prognosis/trajectory?
 - Perhaps with a communication tool similar to 'Breaking Bad News' guides
- How can we better prepare medical students to manage uncertainty at the end of life?
 - Managing cognitive dissonance
 - Meta-cognition
 - Emotional and spiritual care

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Supporting medical
students to support
themselves

Supporting medical
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Context

- **Stress**
- **Burnout**
- **Moral injury**
- **Mental health issues**
- **Shame**
- **Resilience**

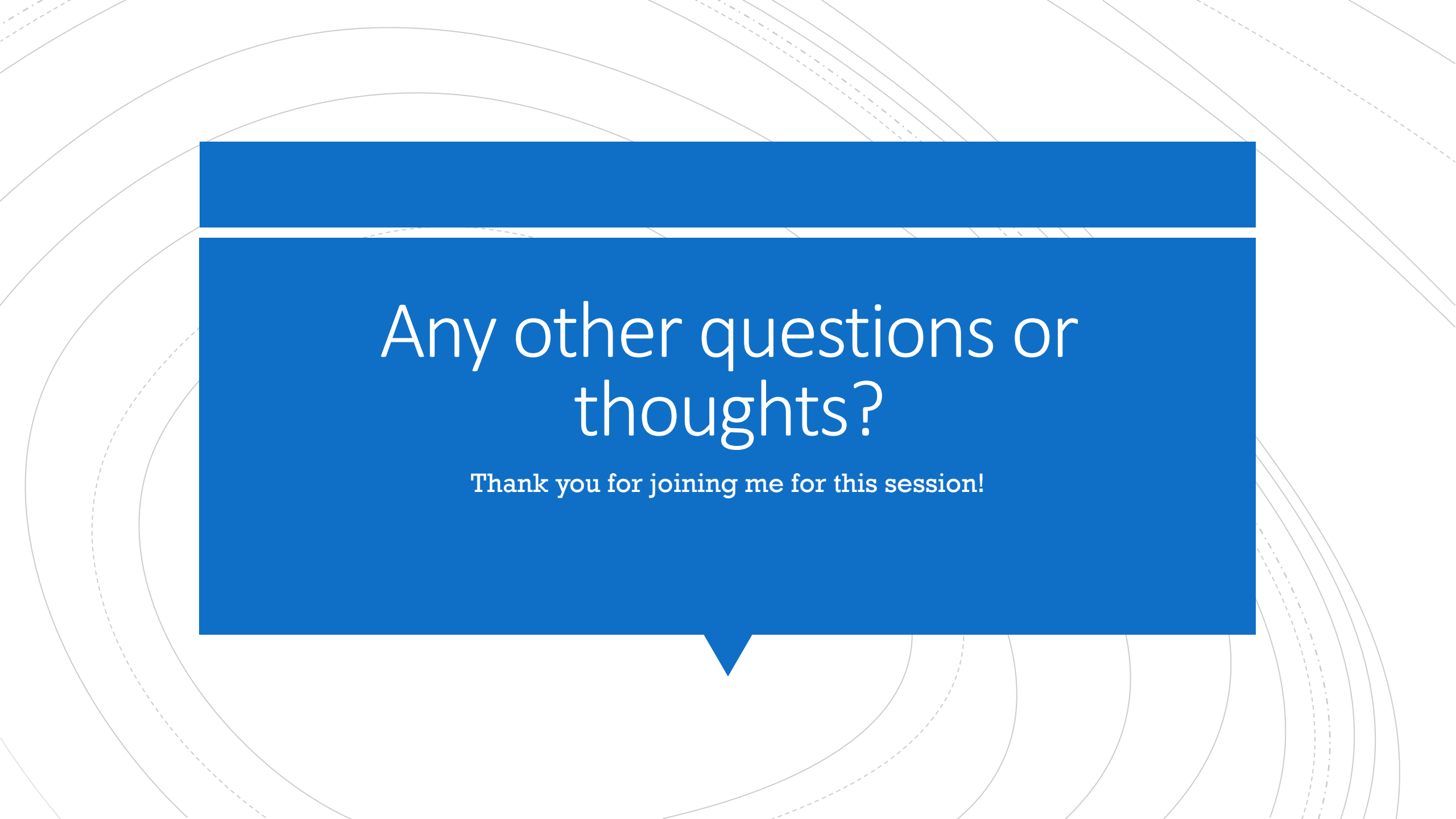
- **Current solutions are rather self-directed**

Supporting medical
students to support
themselves
Ideas

- **How can we integrate teaching self-care methods into medical school curricula from the start?**

Questions for the session

- 1. Which idea do you think is the most intriguing?
 1. Preparing medical students to provide Palliative Care
 2. Uncertainty and cognitive dissonance
 3. Supporting medical students to support themselves
- 2. What aspect of that idea do you feel requires particular attention?



Any other questions or
thoughts?

Thank you for joining me for this session!