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## **My First Patient: Clinical and Pastoral Implications of the DR**

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Cambridge medical students start full body dissection within 3 days of commencing their medical training. They have very little patient contact during the first three years, prior to their final three years of clinical training. Students are encouraged to view their donor as their first patient: someone who has chosen to help with their education, from whom they will learn a great deal and to be treated with utmost respect. Their professionalism develops as they work together a team in the DR. An increasing emphasis on the clinical and professional relevance of their work in the DR is eroding the traditional divide between preclinical and clinical studies.

Our recent longitudinal cohort study followed of four years of our students for six years until qualification. First years reported high levels of anxiety before first entering the DR, although this eased considerably after a few dissection sessions: anticipation appears to be worse than the reality. A substantial minority (23%) of students reported a close personal bereavement within the 12 months prior to starting the course: between 13% and 22% reported close bereavement each year during the course. Attitudes towards Palliative Care become less favourable during the preclinical years, but improve during clinical.

The educational and pastoral implications of meeting a “first patient” in the DR will be discussed.