

Difficult Conversations

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The Gap

- Between what is expected, and what is really happening

The Gap

- Between what is expected, and what is really happening
 - New (bad) diagnosis
 - Worsening prognosis
 - Changing treatment expectations/escalation plan
 - Errors/mistakes

The bigger the gap, the more
difficult the conversation

Bad news

- Breaking bad news

SPIKES

Setting

Perception

Invitation

Knowledge

Empathy/**E**motion

Summary/**S**trategy

New (bad) diagnosis

- Cancer
- Motor neuron disease
- Dementia

New (bad) diagnosis

- Cancer
- Motor neuron disease
- Dementia
- Epilepsy

New (bad) diagnosis

- Cancer
- Motor neuron disease
- Dementia
- Epilepsy
- Infection, especially contagious

- Doctors

- Doctors

- Nurses

- Physiotherapist

- Occupational therapist

- Social worker

- Etc

Other bad news

Other bad news

- Cancelled tests

Other bad news

- Cancelled tests
- Delayed discharge

Other bad news

- Cancelled tests
- Delayed discharge
- Immediate discharge

Other bad news

- Cancelled tests
- Delayed discharge
- Moving wards/beds

Other bad news

- Cancelled tests
- Delayed discharge
- Moving wards/beds
- Food quality

Other bad news

- Cancelled tests
- Delayed discharge
- Immediate discharge
- Food quality
- etc



Treatment Escalation Plan

- Ceiling of Care
- Advance Care/future care plan
- DNACPR



Treatment Escalation Plan

Setting

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Treatment Escalation Plan/ Advance Care Plan

- Patient cues/prompts
- Patient's understanding
- Family cues/prompts/understanding

Treatment Escalation Plan

- DNACPR—what does patient/family understand
- ICU
- Other interventions

Treatment Escalation Plan

- Aim for a joint understanding
- Clinical responsibility



Conflict



Conflict

- Between patient and healthcare team
- Between family and healthcare team
- Between patient and family
- Between different members of the healthcare team

Conflict

- All people want to do their best
- All people want to do what is right
- All people want to do their best for the patient – staff advocate, family advocate.

- Patient emotion
- Family emotion

- Patient emotion
- Family emotion

- Upset
- Tearful
- Angry
- Aggressive

- Staff emotion

- Staff emotion

- Upset
- Irritated
- Frustration
- Frightened
- Angry

Staff response

- Remember we all have good intentions
- Maintain calm
- Listen to what is being said, allow the person vent emotions
- If you can explain, do so and apologize; if you can't explain, apologize
- Expect to have to repeat explanation and apology
- Debrief with colleagues/managers
- Learning reflection

Resources

- Making Conversations Easier
- National Healthcare Communication Programme

hseland.ie

All Ireland Institute for Hospice & Palliative Care

- <https://palliativecarehubprofessional.com/>

Thank you and any questions?