Surgical Professionalism and Interpersonal Communication Education (SPICE)

Delivering Bad News: How to be a Masterful Clinician

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Goals

• To improve resident’s effectiveness in their delivery of bad news
• To provide residents with facts about post-death procedures.
You will be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to deliver bad news
- Demonstrate recognizing and responding to patients emotional reactions to bad news
- Appreciate that delivering bad news is difficult for both the patient and doctor and may influence the doctor patient relationship.
Delivering Bad News

- Death
- Diagnosis
- Impairment of vital function (personal or professional)
Why is this so hard?

• Lack of confidence in skill
• Lack of knowledge
  – To navigate the system
  – Medical knowledge
• Time constraints/Privacy/Personal Discomfort
• Education
  – Role modeling
  – Lecture
Impact of Training

Prepared for Bad News: Pre SPICE 31% Post SPICE 80%
Assessed Readiness: Pre SPICE 31% Post SPICE 53%
Provided Next Steps: Pre SPICE 31% Post SPICE 67%
% SP Recommended to Others: Pre SPICE 100%
Delivering Bad News

- Mr. Cooper’s wife was hit by a car days ago.
- On day 2 of her hospitalization she was taken to the OR for ORIF.
- The next morning the intern was called for acute SOB and the patient proceeded to have a fatal pulmonary embolus.
- Mr. Cooper has just arrived at the hospital to visit his wife.
Delivering Bad News

• Prepare Yourself
  – Information, emotions and privacy

• Assess Readiness
  – Forecast news

• Give Information
  – Small chunks, watch for shock/shut down

• Check Patient’s response
  – Expect strong emotions, find out what they are thinking

• Make a follow up plan
  – Contact information, Write things down
Common Pitfalls

- Failure to recognize that we are giving bad news
- No “warning shot”
- Failure to recognize/address emotion
- Too much information too soon
- Not finding out what patient knows/thinks/fears before giving information
- Premature reassurance
Nuts & Bolts

• Organ Donation (call the network)
• Post-mortem/autopsy (defer until ME)
• Personal effects (defer until ME)
• Victim Services (SW)
• Viewing the body (preparation)
• Paperwork
  – Preliminary information sheet
  – Medical examiner notification *
  – Death certificate
Resources

• Call for support for YOU and the FAMILY
• Chaplain/minister/rabbi
• Social work
• Friends or family
Take Home Points

• Giving bad news is NEVER easy
• Following an outline will help you feel more at ease
• Debriefing can help YOU cope