

TITLE: Communication 2

Topic: 3

Effective Communication in Palliative Care

Effective communication is one of the foundational concepts proposed by the Canadian Hospice Palliative care Association (2002). Care planning and informed decision making are at the core of this concept as well as the belief that effective communication leads to; better care and planning, greater patient and family satisfaction, and less stress for patients and staff.

To be effective, Hospice/Palliative caregivers are encouraged to:

- Share a common language
- Use a standard protocol to communicate, and to listen and respond to patient/family reactions
- Collect data and document the patient/family status
- Educate patients, families and caregivers

Ferris FD, Balfour HM, Bowen K, Farley J, Hardwick M, Lamontagne C, et al. A Model to Guide Hospice Palliative Care: Based on National Principles and Norms of Practice. Ottawa, ON, Canada: 2002

The basics of effective/therapeutic communication:

- Sit down Lean in (Dr. Mike Harlos) anticipate, acknowledge, normalize and validate
- Ensure you have time and privacy
- Ensure that all of the people/family are available and present (validate with the patient)
- Be clear (avoid euphemisms)
- Listen to and focus on individual needs
- Be sensitive to cultural beliefs and practices but avoid assumptions and judgment
- Self-reflect and understand your own values, beliefs and emotions
- Ground yourself before entering the room or a meeting

Challenging conversations:

- Advanced Care Planning, Goals of Care, Health Care Directives and ACP levels
- Arrangement for anticipated home death
- Changes in status and advancing disease
- Preparation for end of life care, normalizing expected signs and symptoms
- Reshaping hope

Starting conversations can be the hardest part:

- *“Sometimes when things start to change, families have concerns about...”*
- *“You might be wondering why your mom is (sleeping more; weaker; not eating/drinking) – we’ve noticed that too, and thought it would be good to talk about these changes...”*
- Try not to have a goal in mind (ACP level signed) be open to where the conversation will go.