Is breaking bad news all bad news?

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No conflicts of interest
Breaking Bad News

- Two scenarios
  - 1976
  - 1990
- Who breaks it?
- How do you break it?
- How did you know what to do?
Breaking Bad News

Defined as

“Any information which adversely and seriously affects an individual’s view of his or her future”

In the eye of the beholder – the students’ concepts
Is an important communication skill

Is a complex communication task

Includes what?
Why is it a difficult task for students?
- Stressful
- Patient already distressed
- How much does the student say?
- The truth is unpleasant
- Fear of lengthy discussion
- Anxiety
- Fear negative evaluation
Breaking Bad News

- Not always associated with cancer
  - Injury or death of a spouse, relative, or friend
  - Special sensitivity with children or SIDS
  - Progressively debilitating conditions
  - Speaking to children, employees, peers
  - Special circumstances of death
Experience is what you get when you don’t get what you want
The Good News!

- Using a strategy for distress can increase student confidence
- Break down aspects into manageable concerns
- Prioritize the fixable from the unfixable
The Good News (continued)

- Encourage patients with difficult treatment decisions
- Trained students perform better in giving bad news
The SPIKES Protocol

- SETTING UP
- PERCEPTION
- INVITATION
- KNOWLEDGE
- EMOTIONS
- STRATEGY - SUMMARY
Breaking Bad News - Results

- SPIKES OSCE checklist distributed to all clerks (~40 per annum)
- Minimum passing score – 60%
- Results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level of training</th>
<th>% score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>One session</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Two sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Integrated into curriculum</td>
<td>80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
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<td>82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Further teaching enhancement</td>
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Impact vs. performance
- Recognition
- Communication skills
- Sense of empathy
- More able to cope
- Positive experience
- Greater confidence
- Positive feedback
- Now standard teaching earlier than later
Empathic Responses - SPs

- An indication to the patient (SP) that students recognise what they are feeling (and why)
  - Verbal and non-verbal
  - Impact of the news rather than understanding
  - “I see that....” “I appreciate ......”
  - Waiting for a response (periods of silence)
  - Clarification with conversation
"I know exactly how you feel."
References

Breaking Bad News

Questions?
Step 1: SETTING UP the interview
- Preparation
- Plan, privacy, involve significant others
- Body posture, non-verbal behaviour
- Taking the time
SPIKES – P

Step 2: Assessing the patient’s PERCEPTION

- Gather before you give
- Patient’s knowledge, expectations and hopes
- What do they understand about the situation? Unrealistic expectations?
- What is their state of mind?
- Hopes?

Opportunity to correct misinformation and tailor your information
Step 3: Obtaining the patient’s INVITATION

- Gather before you give
- How much does the patient want to know?
  - Coping strategy?
- Answer questions, offer to speak to another
Step 4: Giving KNOWLEDGE and information to the patient

- Warning shot
- Use simple language, no jargon,
- Vocabulary and comprehension of patient
- Small chunks, avoid detail unless requested
- Pause, allow information to sink in
- Wait for response before continuing
- Check understanding
- Check impact
Step 5: Addressing the patient’s EMOTIONS with empathic responses

- Shock, isolation, grief
- Silence, disbelief, crying, denial, anger
- Observe patient’s responses and identify emotions
- Offer empathic responses
Step 6: STRATEGY and SUMMARY

- Are they ready?
- Involve the patient in the decision making
- Check understanding
  - Clarify patient’s goals
- Summarise
- Contract for future
What is Empathy?

- The capacity to recognise emotions that are being felt by another person.