Teaching Learners How to Navigate Difficult Conversations

BCH Academy for Teaching and Educational Innovation and Scholarship

Wednesday, September 11, 2019

Noon Seminar

Faculty

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this seminar, learners will be able to:

- Reflect on an approach to teaching learners how to navigate difficult conversations

- Identify key teaching points about communication in difficult conversations

- Formulate strategies for developing educational programs in communication skills

Agenda

12:00-12:15 Facilitated video-based exercise

12:15-12:30 What to teach; how to teach it

12:30-12:55 Build a program

12:55- 1:00 Key takeaways

Suggestions For Watching Video

- Specific objective:
  - What are the key teaching points?
  - How would you teach them?
- The purpose is NOT to depict “the Way” or to decide what these practitioners could have, or should have, done differently or better
- Invitation to watch this video in a way that might be different for you.
- Our brains are wired to go to be judgmental – did I like this, is it any good?
  - Highly edited conversations
  - View in light of specific objectives

Spina Bifida: Crystal Coleman

- 21 year old living with her friend, Jackie
- First pregnancy, not in contact with her family or baby's father
- Referred by primary OB for detailed ultrasound b/c of elevated alpha fetal protein that indicates increased possibility of an open neural tube defect

Spina Bifida: Crystal Coleman

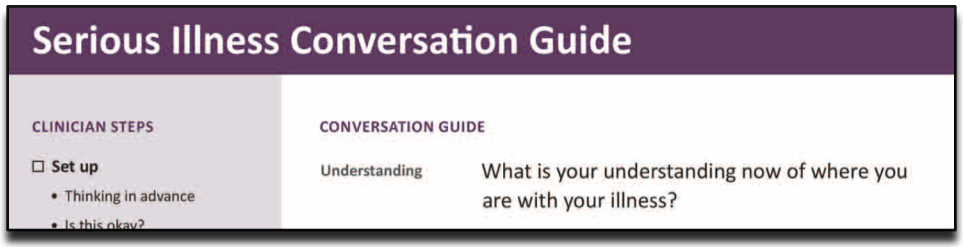
- Ultrasound at 20 weeks and 5 days shows male fetus with lumbosacral myelomeningocele (spina bifida) at mid-lumbar spine, with associated brain anatomic abnormalities and mildly dilated ventricles;
  - neurodevelopmental prognosis is uncertain.
- In this situation, some women might continue the pregnancy, some might discontinue the pregnancy, some might opt for prenatal (intrauterine) repair.

Learning Objectives

- Identify key teaching points about communication in difficult conversations

- Formulate strategies for developing educational programs in communication skills

Checklists, Scripts, and Mnemonics



Serious Illness Conversation Guide

CLINICIAN STEPS	CONVERSATION GUIDE	
☐ Set up • Thinking in advance • Is this okay?	Understanding	What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?

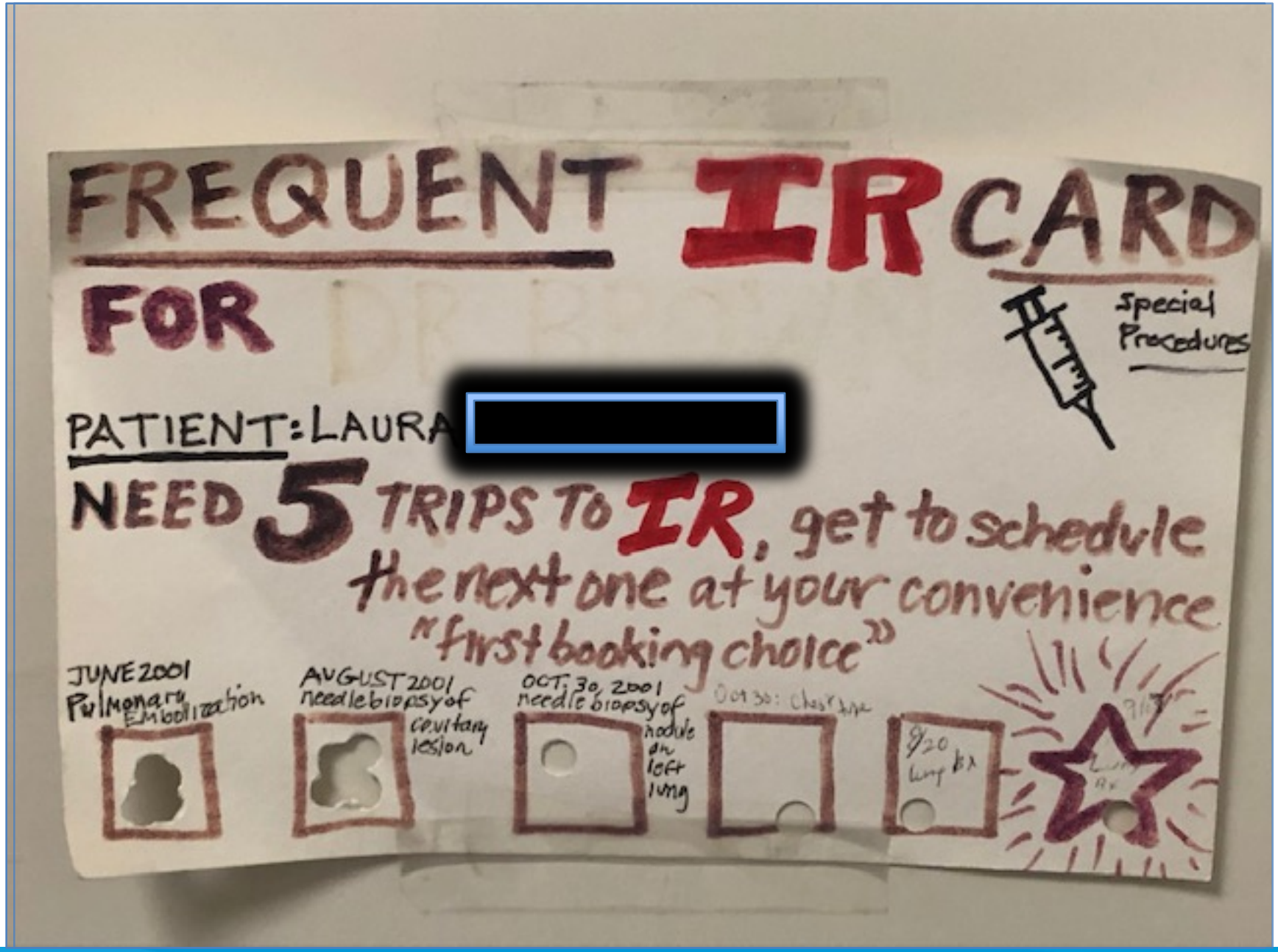
SPIKES—A Six-Step Protocol for Delivering Bad News: Application to the Patient with Cancer

- Conversational structure
  - Beginning, middle, and end
  - Upstream and downstream context
- Practical words and phrases
  - “what is your understanding”
  - “I wish that things were different”

The Script

- “In medical school we’re taught to follow a script.”
- “But then the script ends…”
- “Just like that, I was in over my head. I had no script...”

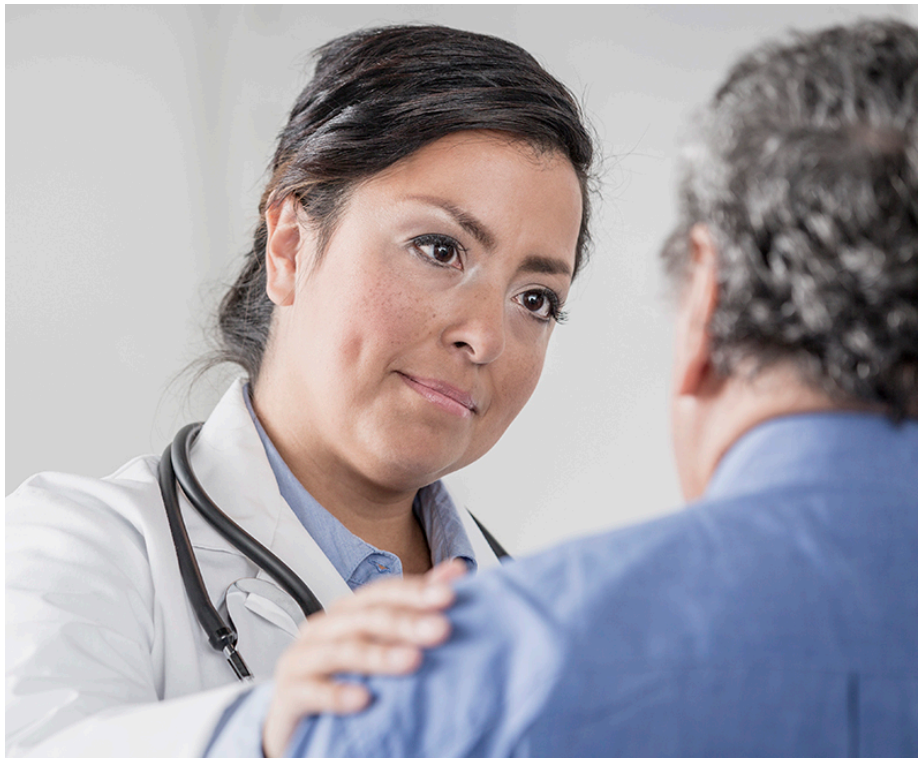
Brody, BA. The Script. N England J Med 355(10), Sept 7, 2006.


FREQUENT IR CARD
FOR
Special Procedures
PATIENT: LAURA [redacted]
NEED 5 TRIPS TO IR, get to schedule the next one at your convenience
"first booking choice"
JUNE 2001
Pulmonary Embolization
AUGUST 2001
needle biopsy of cavitary lesion
OCT. 30, 2001
needle biopsy of nodule on left lung

Relational Competency: The Art of Communication

Relational skills require relational learning

Key Point 1:
Ask learners to consider: How would you want the information conveyed if it were you?



Key Point 2:
Ask learners to identify common traits of good communication with patients

- Sensitivity
- Courtesy
- Compassion / empathy
- Appropriateness

Gunderman, AJR 2001

Key Point 3:
Ask learners to consider elements of nonverbal communication

Key Point 4:
Ask learners to consider elements of verbal communication

- Content:
  - What you say
- Tone:
  - How you say it
- Clients:
  - Who you say it to
- Partners
  - Who is with you
- Pitfalls
  - How to avoid and recover

Key Point 5:
Help learners to anticipate questions, and emotions, concerns

Key Point 6:
Know the key points you want to target

General Pedagogical Considerations

- How long a session?
- Didactic and educational media supplements
- Group discussion triggers
- Learner cohort
- Platform
  - Live simulations: group vs. group/individualized vs. individualized
  - Video-based: in-person vs. online
  - Role-play
- Creating topics and scenarios
- Faculty
- Actors
- Facilitated, reflective, peer-peer, group, active (adult) learning
- Safe learning space

What pedagogical approach should be used?

- Depends on
  - Budget
  - Resources
  - Scalability
  - Learner cohort
  - Educational objectives

Exercise

- Situation: The hospital has set the goal of improving its communication with families about determination of death by neurologic criteria (DNC; sometimes called "brain death")
- How would you teach learners about this difficult conversation?

Takeaways