

Title: Training Oncology Residents on Breaking Bad News

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What problem was addressed: Physician communication skills are critical for patient-centered care, therefore interpersonal and communication training is essential to almost all quality improvement programs. Breaking bad news, such as disclosing a cancer diagnosis or a poor prognosis, is reported to be one of the most stressful communication tasks faced by healthcare professionals (1). In Egypt, there is a high patient load and there is not adequate time to deal with patients and their families to break bad news in an appropriate manner. In addition, oncology residents are not trained enough on communication skills and therefore cannot deal professionally with cancer patients or their families especially in advanced cases.

What was done: We started by needs assessment study. We had focus group discussion to explore patients' families' satisfaction with the way they receive bad news. We also gathered baseline information about residents' experiences and attitudes when BBNs. We constructed a 14 questions questionnaire (5-point Likert scale items and open-ended questions). Eighteen residents completed an online form. We used descriptive statistics to summarize data. We also measured residents' empathy level by using Jefferson Empathy Scale, Physician version, paper form

What was learned: Patients' families were dissatisfied with the way they knew about the diagnosis of their relatives as they didn't receive adequate information or answers to their questions.

Only 27.3% of residents felt comfortable in discussing issues as cancer diagnosis/prognosis/life expectancy with patients and/or their families. Interestingly, 83.3% thought that patients should know everything about their cancer. About 44% had received training on communication skills in different forms (lectures, online, blended) but only 16.7% had interactive face to face training. All residents expressed their need to have an interactive form of training. Our study supports the initiation of a structured training program for all our residents on BBNs. This training will be in the form of blended format that combines both online and interactive face to face training

Reference:

Monden, Kimberley R., Lonnie Gentry, and Thomas R. Cox. "Delivering Bad News to Patients." Proceedings (Baylor University. Medical Center) 29.1 (2016): 101–102. Print.