Communicating Bad News

- **Before**
  - Ensure the news is given in person, in a quiet, private place
  - Allow enough uninterrupted time
  - Encourage the presence of a family member or friend when possible
  - If communication in person is not possible, ensure that the patient is well supported before disclosure is made

- **During**
  - Assess the patient’s personal preferences for information – How much do they wish to know?
  - Determine the patient’s present understanding
  - Provide information in digestible chunks in language the patient understands, starting with the background information and any limitations to the information
  - Tell the truth, but avoid giving the message that “nothing can be done”
  - Respond to emotions with empathy

- **In conclusion**
  - Provide information that has hope-giving potential
  - Summarize the information and plan of action
  - Assess the understanding of the patient; “Can you tell me what you’ve heard me say today?”
  - Assure patient and family that continued proactive care and support will be provided
  - Book a follow up appointment to review ‘the news’ and answer further questions