



Provincial Health Services Authority

SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE

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Systems Innovation (www.ariadnelabs.org) &
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

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Conversation flow	Patient-tested language
1. Set up the conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce purpose • Ask permission 	Set Up <p>"I'd like to talk about what is ahead with your illness and do some thinking in advance about what is important to you so that I can make sure we provide you with the care you want – is this okay?"</p>
2. Assess illness understanding & information preferences	Assess <p>"What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?" "How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?"</p>
3. Share prognosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame with a "wish...worry", "hope...worry" statement • Allow silence, explore emotion 	Share <p>Prognosis: "I want to share with you my understanding of where things are with your illness..." Uncertain: "It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your illness. I hope you will continue to live well for a long time but I'm worried that you could get sick quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility." Time: "I wish we were not in this situation, but I'm worried that time may be short as_ (express as a range e.g. weeks to months, months to a year)." OR Function: "I hope that this is not the case, but I'm worried that this may be as strong as you will feel"</p>
4. Explore key topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals • Fears & worries • Sources of strength • Critical abilities • Trade-offs • Family 	Explore <p>"What are your most important goals if your health situation worsens?" "What are your biggest fears and worries about the future with your health?" "What gives you strength as you think about the future with your illness?" "What abilities are so critical to your life that you can't imagine living without them?" "If you become sicker, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?" "How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes?"</p>
5. Close the conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize what you've heard • Make a recommendation; check in with patient • Affirm your commitment to the patient 	Close <p>"I've heard you say that ____ is really important to you. Keeping that in mind, and what we know about your illness, I recommend that we _____. This will help us make sure that your treatment plan reflect what's important to you" "How does this plan seem to you?" "I will do everything I can to help you through this."</p>
6. Document your conversation & 7. Communicate with key clinicians	