

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