Palliative Care Communication Skills
Personal Enrichment Course

SPRING 2021

University
of
Pittsburgh

School
of
Medicine

Course Dates:	Feb 1, 8, 15, and 22 (1:00—3:30 PM)
Maximum Students:	16
Class Year:	MS1 and MS2
Course Director:	Linda King, MD Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD
Contact Information:	Linda King, MD kingl@upmc.edu
Registration:	Denise Downs, Office of Medical Education ddowns@medschool.pitt.edu

Description:
This course is meant to be a supplement to the Introduction to Medical Interviewing MS1 course, with the aim of introducing students to communication techniques to use when facing difficult situations in their clinical practice. This will be primarily a skills-based workshop series, with short didactic sessions introducing key communication skills followed by practice sessions facilitated by palliative care physicians. Sessions of the course will include: Delivering Bad News, Disclosing an Adverse Event or Medical Error, Discussing Goals of Care, Withdrawing Life Support, Code Status and Death Pronouncement. Themes woven throughout this workshop series will be preparing for difficult conversations, addressing patient emotion, and recognizing that a provider's emotions can be a barrier to communication.

Requirements:
1. Students must demonstrate respect for each other, the faculty and the subject matter, including a willingness to explore topics that may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable.
2. Each student will be required to attend 4 of the 5 skill workshops.
3. Students may be expected to read assigned readings before each workshop and to engage actively in the class

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:
1. Understand how physicians think about navigating difficult conversations with patients and families.
2. Demonstrate skills in interviewing and counseling patients and family members via role-play with faculty and standardized patients.
3. Evaluate their own attitudes toward dealing with patients with serious illness and end-of-life discussions and decisions.
4. Understand and use effective communication strategies successfully when discussing difficult topics with patients.

Pre-Requisites: None

Session 1: 2/1/21 (1:00 – 3:30PM) via ZOOM (link will be sent by facilitator)
Title: Delivering Bad News
Session Instructors: Linda King, MD and Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD

Description: This session will provide an overview of the skills needed to share serious news, such as a life-changing diagnosis. Students will learn about SPIKES, a step-wise framework for these difficult discussions: S stands for setting, P for perception, I for invitation or information, K for knowledge, E for empathy, and S for summarize or strategize. Teaching methods include short didactic session followed by small group role-play with standardized patients and faculty facilitators.
Objectives:
    Know the steps in the SPIKES framework for sharing unexpected news.
    Know the role of "Ask-Tell-Ask" in assessing patient understanding.
    Practice sharing a serious diagnosis with a patient.
    Practice responding to patient emotion using NURSE statements.
    Practice how to conclude a visit when difficult news has been shared with a patient.

Session 2: 2/8/21 (1:00 – 3:30PM) via ZOOM (link will be sent by facilitator)
Title: Disclosing an adverse event or a medical error
Session Instructors: Linda King, MD and Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD

Description: In this session, students will learn to apply the skills learned in Session 1 (Giving Bad News) to deal with how to disclose a Medical Error to a patient/family. The framework utilized is ERROR and is comprised of the following: E, an explicit statement that an error occurred, R, reporting what happened and why it occurred, R, responding to emotion, O, offering an apology, and R, recurrence prevention.

Objectives:
    Recognize the importance of disclosing medical errors
    Recognize the role of our own emotions (shame, guilt, fear) when disclosing errors
    Practice disclosing a medical error to a patient/family

Student Preparation:
Fast Fact # 194. Disclosing Medical Errors. **https://www.mypcnow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FF-194-Disclosing-Medical-Error.-3rd-Ed-2.pdf**

Session 3: 2/15/21 (1:00 – 3:30PM) via ZOOM (link will be sent by facilitator)
Title: Goals of care
Session Instructors: Linda King, MD and Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD

Description: In this session, students will learn a structured and stepwise approach in discussing goals of care with a patient or family member. The framework used is called REMAP, R stands for Reframe, E stands for addressing emotions, M stands for mapping patient's values, A stands for aligning with patient's values, and P stands for proposing a plan.

Objectives:
    Students will be able to outline the steps of a goals of care conversation
    Students will understand the importance of a clear headline
    Students will learn several ways to assess patients' values
    Students will understand the importance of proposing a treatment plan that is based on patients'
        values

Student preparation: **https://www.vitaltalk.org/guides/transitionsgoals-of-care**

Session 4: 2/22/21 (1:00 – 3:30PM) via ZOOM (link will be sent by facilitator)
Title: Withdrawing Life Support
Session Instructors: Linda King, MD and Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD

Description: During this session, students will learn how to support a family after they decide to withdraw life support. They will support the family's decision, determine what they want to know, what are their needs, determine when life-support will be withdrawn, and address symptoms during the dying process.

Objectives:
Students will understand the importance of supporting a family's decision to withdraw life support
Students will learn to address important issues such as timing of withdrawal, pastoral care, guiding parents on how to talk to their children about dying
Students will know symptoms of the dying process and learn to describe them to family members
Student preparation:

Fast Fact #149: Teaching the family what to expect when the patient is dying, **https://www.mypcnow.org/fast-fact/teaching-the-family-what-to-expect-when-the-patient-is-dying/**

Session 5: TBA
Title: Two Practical Skills: Discussing Code Status and Death Pronouncement
Session Instructors: Linda King, MD and Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD

Description: This session will provide an introduction to two skills that students will encounter on clinical rotations: Discussing Code Status with a Patient and Death Pronouncement.   Students will learn how to discuss code status during a routine hospital admission and also when a patient has a more advanced illness. Students will learn what language to avoid when talking about code status. Death pronouncement is the final medical act between a patient and physician and must be handled with care and compassion. Students will be taught practical aspects of death pronouncement and how to address the needs of family when pronouncing death.

Discussing Code Status

Objectives:
Identify common pitfalls when discussing code status.
Practice discussing code status with a patient hospitalized with a low likelihood of dying.
Practice discussing code status with a patient with an active, life-limiting illness.

Student Preparation:
https://inkvessel.com/2017/12/14/how-do-you-discuss-code-status-cartoons-of-common-traps/
Charles F. von Gunten. Discussing Do-Not-Resuscitate. Journal of Clinical Oncology 2001;19:5, 1576-1581.
Palliative Care Networks of Wisconsin's Fast Fact #365, 366

Death Pronouncement

Description: This part of the session will provide students with skills in how to pronounce death and attend to the needs of acutely bereaved family members.

Objectives:
Know steps to pronounce death in a hospitalized patient.
Practice how to notify family of death by phone.
Practice how to pronounce death with family present in the room.

Student Preparation: Read pages 2268-2270 of Hallenback J. Palliative Care in the Final Days of Life. JAMA 2005; 293. 2265-2271.