



Professional Enrichment Course

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Office of Medical Education

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Advanced Communication Skills: Palliative Care

Enrollment Period:	Spring 2022
Course Dates:	4 Monday afternoons from 1 – 4 pm Jan 31, Feb 7, Feb 14, Feb 28
Student Max:	18
Class Year:	MS1, MS2
Course Director:	Linda King, MD Email: kingl@upmc.edu Eva Reitschuler-Cross, MD Email: reitschulercrosseb@upmc.edu
Course Administrator:	Linda King, MD Email: kingl@upmc.edu
Location:	Scaife Hall
Registration:	Via Amp Up – You will receive an email with enrollment info
Course Description:	This course is meant to be a supplement to the MS1 and MS2 Medical Interviewing Courses, with the aim of introducing students to communication skills used when facing difficult situations in their clinical practice. This will be primarily a skills-based workshop series, with short didactic sessions and demonstrations introducing key communication skills followed by practice sessions utilizing Standardized Patients and facilitated by Palliative Care physicians. Sessions will include Delivering Unexpected/Serious News, Discussing Goals of Care, Communication when Caring for a Dying Patient, Discussing 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.
Objectives:	Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">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 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
Requirements:	Attend the 4 sessions
Texts:	None. Brief readings or videos provided for each session.

Session 1:

Title: Delivering Unexpected or Serious 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.

Student Preparation:

Fast Fact # 6: [Delivering Bad News - Part 1 - Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin \(mypcnow.org\)](http://mypcnow.org)

Fast Fact # 11: [Delivering Bad News - Part 2 - Palliative Care Network of Wisconsin \(mypcnow.org\)](http://mypcnow.org)

Session 2:

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 3:

Title: Communication when Caring for a Dying Patient

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 or when a patient is actively dying. They will support the family's decision, determine what they want to know, what are their needs, and address symptoms during the dying process.

Objectives:

- Students will understand the importance of supporting a family's decisions at the end of life
- Students will learn to address important issues such as talking about prognosis, role of 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 4:

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.