

Palliative Care – Activity Two

Breaking bad news to the family

There are many things to consider when giving bad news to a family, an easy way to remember these is by remembering a mnemonic. Please answer these multiple choice questions on two different mnemonics:

ABCDE mnemonic (Rabow & McPhee, 1999):

1. What does A stand for in this mnemonic?
 - a) Adhere to hospital policies
 - b) Advanced preparation
 - c) Arrange a time to talk

2. What does B stand for in this mnemonic?
 - a) Build a therapeutic environment / relationship
 - b) Be aware of the situation
 - c) Be prepared for any reaction

3. What does C stand for in this mnemonic?
 - a) Create a calm environment
 - b) Clear up any questions
 - c) Communicate well

4. What does E stand for in this mnemonic?
 - a) Explain well and clearly
 - b) Encourage and validate emotions
 - c) Encourage questions

5. Now write out the whole mnemonic and meanings, including what D stands for:

A

B

C

D

E

The SPIKES mnemonic (Baile et al, 2000):

6. What does S stand for in this mnemonic?

- a) Setting up the interview
- b) Seeing the patient
- c) Suggesting you are going to give bad news

7. What does P stand for in this mnemonic?

- a) Perceiving the patients reactions
- b) Being Prepared
- c) Assessing the patients Perception

8. What does the I stand for in this mnemonic?

- a) Obtaining the patients Invitation
- b) Involve the MDT
- c) Ask the patient if they want any family to be Included

9. What does the K stand for in this mnemonic?

- a) Obtaining what the patient Knows
- b) Giving Knowledge and information to the patient
- c) Know what you are going to say

10. What does the E stand for in this mnemonic?

- a) Be Empathetic
- b) Explain and answer questions
- c) Addressing the patients Emotions with empathetic responses

11. What does the last S stand for in this mnemonic?

- a) Strategy and summarise
- b) Suggest a plan
- c) Give the patient some Space and time

12. What would you consider when setting up an interview – write down three:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Answers

1. B

2. A

3. C

4. B

5. Advanced Preparation

Build a therapeutic environment / relationship

Communicate well

Deal with patient / family reactions

Encourage and validate emotions

6. A

7. C

8. A

9. B

10. C

11. A

12. Three from:

- Arrange privacy
- Involve significant others
- Sit down
- Make a connection with the patient
- Manage time constraints and interruptions

References:

Baile WF, Buckman R, Lenzi R, et al. SPIKES – a six-step protocol for delivering bad news: application to the patient with cancer. *The Oncologist* 5 (2000):302-311. retrieved from https://aahivm-education.org/reference/baile-2000_27/8/2019

Rabow M.W., McPhee S. J. Beyond breaking bad news; how to help patients who suffer. *West J Med* 1999, 171: 260-3.