

Palliative Care Communication Essentials for COVID-19

- Communication is very important at this time. It is better for patients and families to receive bad news than no news at all.
- Remember: 'the smallest kindness can make all the difference'. Your communication can be very powerful.

Focus on using phrases such as **"I wish"** **"I'm concerned"** **"I hope"** **"May I suggest"**
"We want to make sure you have the best care possible"

Goals of Care Discussions

Medical preparation

Check for ACP/ Advance directives
 Which medical interventions will help if he /she deteriorates?
 Develop a medical opinion before seeing the patient
 Start to think in terms of shared goals of care
 This is the outcome of a decision-making process between the patient, family, whānau and the clinical team(s)
 Try to identify the overall direction for an episode of care (eg. curative, restorative, focused on improving quality of life or providing end-of-life care) and any limitations on medical treatment.

Check understanding

"I am so sorry you are feeling so unwell"
 "Can I start with what you understand so far?"

Elicit discussion preferences

Do you like to talk about what is happening?"
 "Or not?"
 "Is there someone else we should talk to?"

Discuss serious news & prognosis

Tell them the information they need and want in small chunks
 "I'm afraid the news is not good" "severe pneumonia I am not sure you will pull through"
 "I know this is not what you wanted to hear"

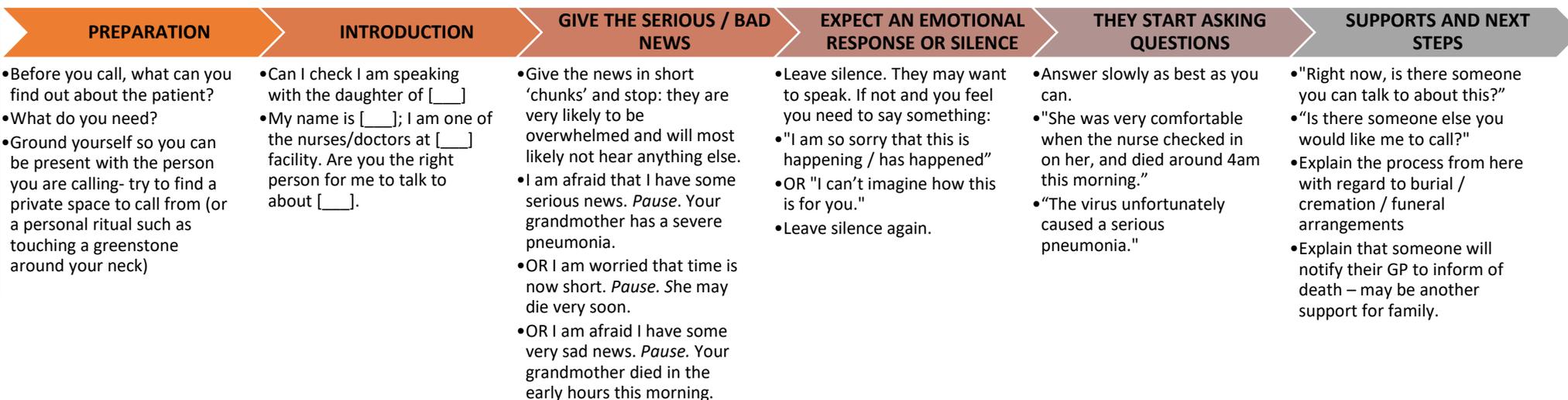
Values goals hopes fears

"If you were to get sicker despite everything we are doing, what would be most important to you?"
 "What things worry you the most?"

Make a recommendation

"In the light of your illness and what you have told me, may I make a recommendation?"
 "My recommendation is to do everything we can with the resources we have to get you through this"
 "Do all we can with what we have to help you recover and if things are not going well, we will keep you comfortable"
 "I'm worried that you won't pull through and we should focus on your comfort"

Giving Bad News



References / Resources for palliative symptom management and communication:

- Hospice NZ COVID resources - <https://www.hospice.org.nz/resources/covid-19-response>
- BC Centre for Palliative Care - <https://bc-cpc.ca/cpc/publications/symptom-management-guidelines/>
- Health Quality and Safety Commission NZ – Serious Illness Conversation Guide
- Find your local hospice service at <https://www.hospice.org.nz/what-is-hospice/find-your-local-hospice/>

- Te Ara Whakapiri – Care of the dying leaflet <https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/te-ara-whakapiri-principles-and-guidance-last-days-life>
- Vitaltalk 2020 – www.vitaltalk.org