



Pearls and Pitfalls of Doctor Patient Communication

...in breast cancer arena

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Clinical Competence Training

- **Components:**
 - i- Medical knowledge
 - ii- Physical exam skills
 - iii- Problem solving skills
- **Measure of career success:**
 - i- Clinical Outcomes
 - ii- Patient satisfaction



Impact of Effective Communication

- Enhanced patient satisfaction
- Increased quality of life
- Reduced patient anxiety and improved symptom control
- Adherence with treatment recommendations
- Enhanced accrual to clinical trials
- Improved disease-related understanding
- Improved prognostic awareness
- Receipt of care consistent with the patient's stated preferences
- Decreased oncologist stress and burnout



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Models and Aspects of Communication



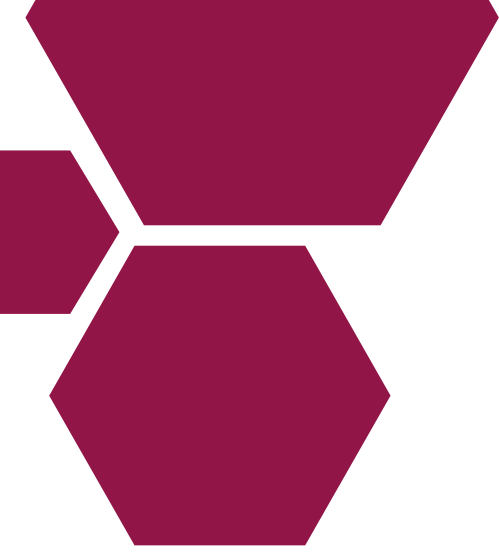
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Status of Training

- A 2003 survey of U.S. medical, radiation, and surgical oncology programs – 1/3 offered communication skills training.
- Lack of faculty time and expertise were identified as the major barriers.
- In a survey by the American Society of Clinical Oncology, few attending oncologists reported receiving mentoring or specific training in communication skills.
- National survey of hematology-oncology fellows - 55% fellows reported less observation and feedback on a communication skill than on a bone marrow biopsy.

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/adjusting-to-cancer/communication-hp-pdq>





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Effective Communication

...the premise

- Communication is a basic clinical skill
- It is learnable (not a personality trait)
- Experience can be a poor teacher
- Knowledge of skill does not translate directly into performance
- Methodical delineation of skill, observation, feedback and continued practice is key

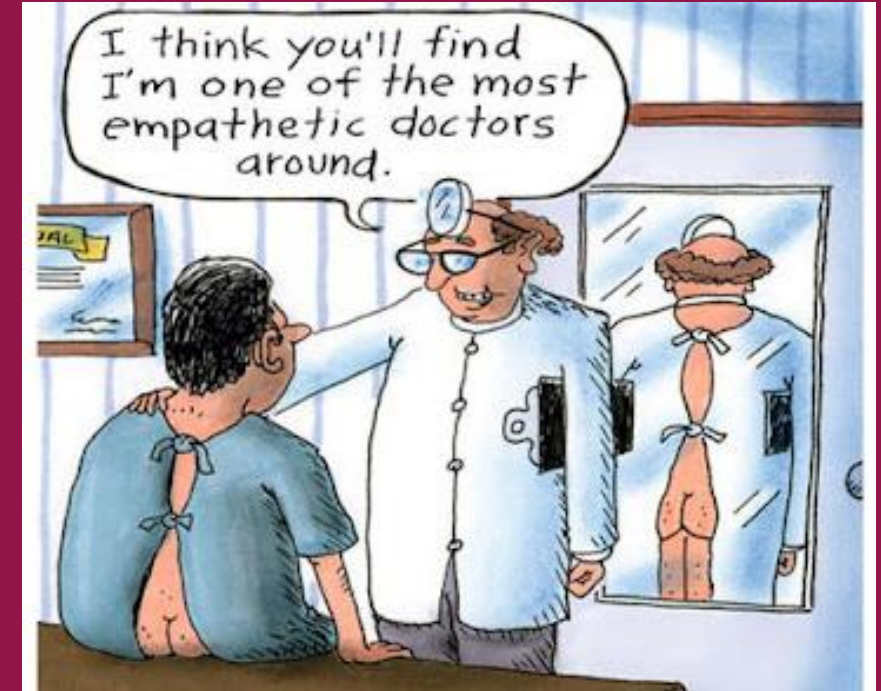


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Effective Communication

... categories of skills

- Content skills - What we do
- Process skills - How we do it
- Perceptual skills - Reading the room



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Adaptable Communication Strategies

(i) Ask - Tell - Ask



Ask

Example phrase for AP

"I am hearing that you have a lot of questions that seem to be about your prognosis. I am happy to answer your questions. What worries you the most?"

Rationale

This is a patient-centered method that draws upon principles of negotiation. This question allows the AP to know what kind of prognostic information to disclose at this particular time.

Tell

The AP discloses the prognostic information that the patient wishes to know at this particular time.

Disclosure of specific prognostic information that the patient wishes to know, fosters trust and the therapeutic relationship

Ask

"Did my response help answer your question?"

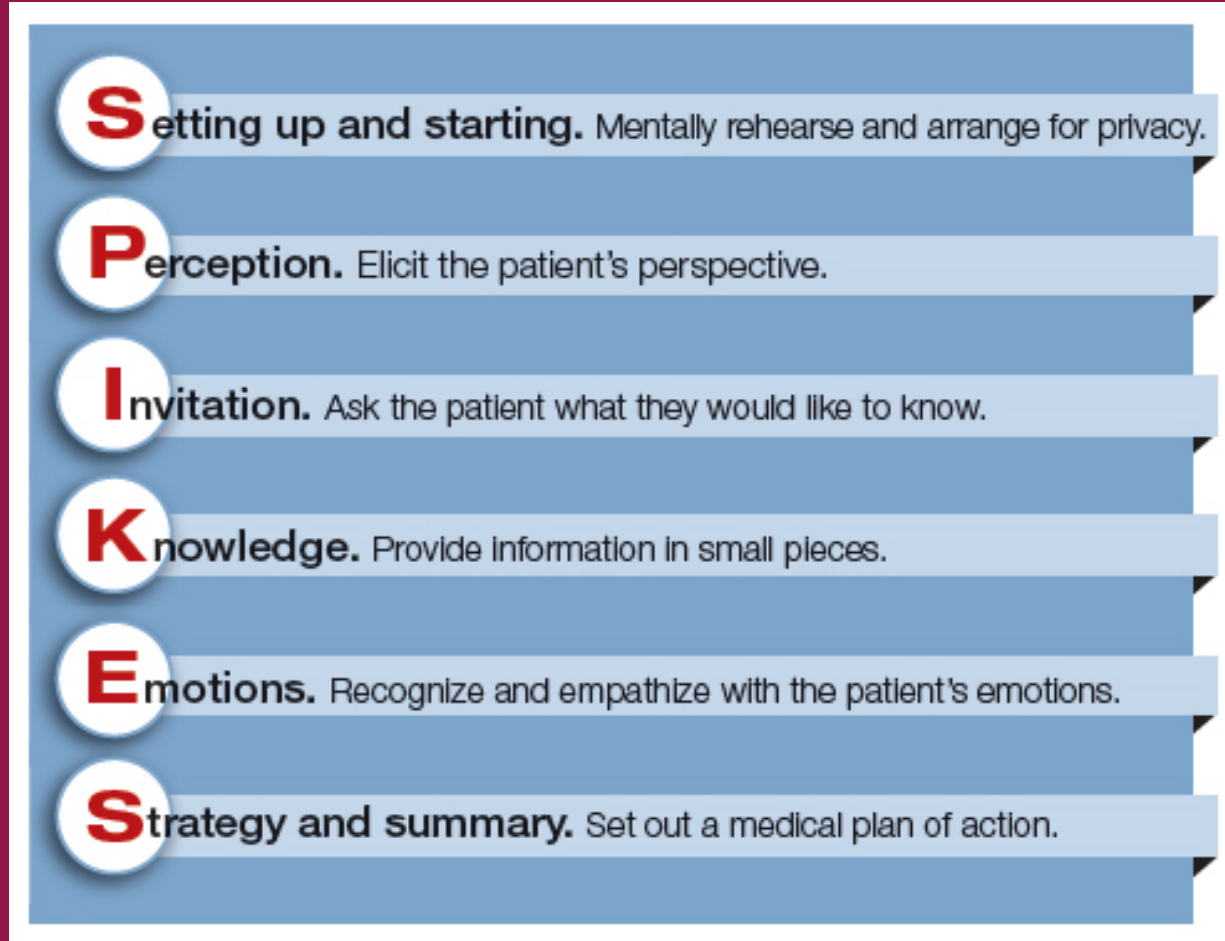
This question helps to clarify the patient's understanding and need for information.



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Adaptable Communication Strategies

(ii) SPIKES



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Adaptable Communication Strategies

(iii) NURSE

Table 1. NURSE Mnemonic for Communicating Empathy⁷

	<i>Example Language for Cancer Misinformation</i>
NAME	“It sounds like you have come across some information that may be leading you to question whether what we are recommending is the best treatment for you.”
UNDERSTAND	“Many patients go online to learn more about cancer treatments”
RESPECT	“I’m impressed that you are taking such an active role in your care.”
SUPPORT	“I’m here to help support you in any way I can.”
EXPLORE	“Tell me more about what makes you read online seem so appealing.”



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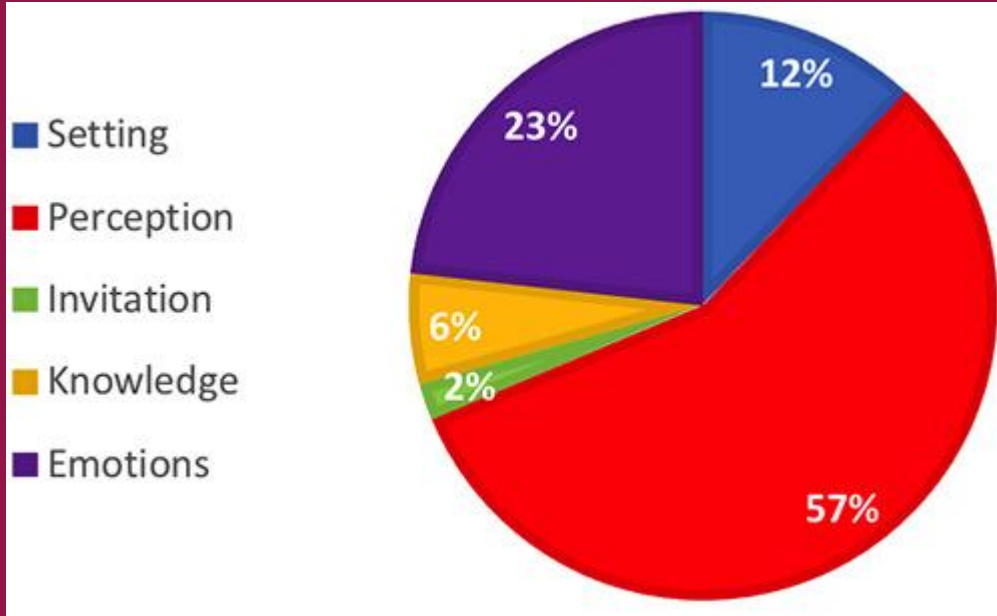
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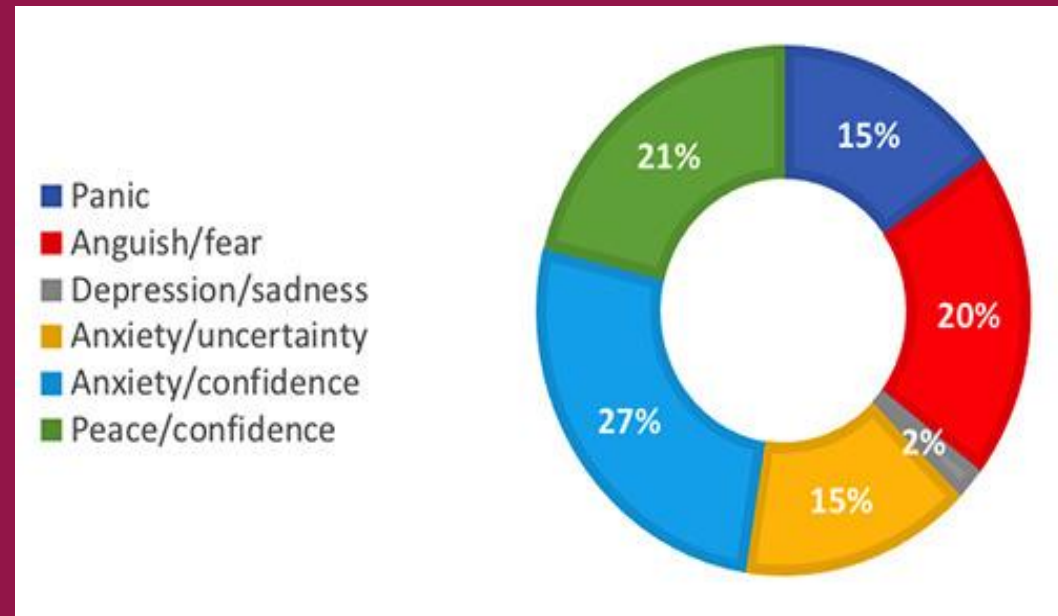
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Breast Cancer Patient Experience

Failure to follow SPIKES protocol



Patient emotions after encounter



Longo V, Abruzzese F, Miserocchi V, Carriero S, Gambaro AC, Saba L, Carriero A. Breast cancer and communication: monocentric experience of a self-assessment questionnaire. J Public Health Res. 2022 Mar 22;11(2):2831. doi: 10.4081/jphr.2022.2831. PMID: 35315263; PMCID: PMC8973206.



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Conclusions

- *“Medicine is an art whose magic and creative ability have long been recognized as residing in the interpersonal aspects of patient-physician relationship.”*

Hall JA, Roter DL, Rand CS. Communication of affect between patient and physician. J Health Soc Behav. 1981;22(1):18–30.

- *Meeting the patient where she is (emotionally, intellectually, and culturally) helps build trust.*
- *Empathy does not meet agreement; failure to agree is okay; failure to empathize is costly.*