

## Tips for compassionate communication with deteriorating PATIENTS

- Ground yourself – slow down and remember to breathe.
  - Acknowledge that this is a stressful situation.
  - Prepare and be clear on what you want to say.

### With the patient

## Avoid sentences such as



- Don't tell people how they feel or what they are experiencing
- Don't promise anything you might not be able to deliver
- Avoid clichés
- Avoid unsolicited advice
- Don't compare to your own experience or that of another patient

*"There is nothing more we can do for you."*

*"Don't worry, you'll die quietly and peacefully with these drugs."*

*"These drugs will let you die without suffering."*

*"You must be strong for your family."*

*"We will make sure that you don't suffer."*

*"You won't be alone"*

### With the patient

## RECOMMENDED expressions



- Listen, use silence
- Acknowledge feelings, resist the urge to fix
- Try to provide information in chunks and leave time for the person to respond
- Use your own words; be genuine

*"Hello, (address the person by name), I am... (introduce yourself by Name, Occupation, Duty)"*

*"It sounds like you are feeling anxious/ afraid / sad. (name emotion) Did I get this right?" This is very understandable*

*"The healthcare team will continue to use all available medical treatments that we think will help you"*

*"I am so sorry that your family cannot be here in person with you-- that must be so difficult."*

*"Although your family cannot visit in person we can arrange for phone calls / Face time so you can talk, see them. Would you like us to set that up? If so with who and how often?"*

## Tips for compassionate communication with FAMILY of deteriorating patients

- Ground yourself – slow down and remember to breathe.
  - Acknowledge that this is a stressful situation.
  - Prepare and be clear on what you want to say.

### When on the phone to the family

- **Don't promise anything you might not be able to deliver**
- **Avoid clichés**



### **Avoid sentences such as**

DO NOT introduce yourself in an impersonal way:

***“Hi, I’m the doctor on duty.”***

Never refer impersonally to the patient:

***“A patient in this stage of COVID-19...”***

DO NOT say:

***“There is nothing more we can do for your father/mother/etc.”***

***“We are withdrawing care.”***

***“Don’t worry, your father/mother/etc. will die peacefully with these drugs.”***

***“These drugs will let him or her die without suffering.”***

### When on the phone to the family

- Make the phone call from a location with minimal or no distractions
- Try to provide information in chunks and leave time for the person to respond
- Acknowledge feelings, resist the urge to fix
- Use your own words; be genuine



### **RECOMMENDED expressions**

***“Hello, (address the person by name), I am... (introduce yourself by Name, Occupation, Duty)”***

***“I’m so sorry that we cannot meet in person to talk about [name of patient].”***

***“I would like to give you an update and share some of my concerns with you.”***

***“I’m sorry to have to tell you this. His/her condition is deteriorating... I am so sorry.”***

***“I want you to know that we will continue to use all available medical treatments that we think will help your family member”***

***“I want to continue to keep you updated. I would like to call you again (give approximate timeframe)—is that ok?”***

***“I wish things were different. This is an extraordinary time we all find ourselves in.”***

***“I can’t imagine how difficult this is for you and everyone else who loves (patient’s name).”***