

Serious Illness Conversation Guide

PATIENT-TESTED LANGUAGE

SET UP "I'd like to talk about what is ahead with your illness and do some thinking in advance about what is important to you so that I can make sure we provide you with the care you want — is this okay?"

ASSESS "What is **your understanding** now of where you are with your illness?"

 "How much **information** about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?"

SHARE "I want to share with you **my understanding** of where things are with your illness..."

Uncertain: "It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your illness. I **hope** you will continue to live well for a long time but I'm **worried** that you could get sick quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility."

OR

Time: "I **wish** we were not in this situation, but I am **worried** that time may be as short as _____ (*express as a range, e.g. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year*)."

OR

Function: "I **hope** that this is not the case, but I'm **worried** that this may be as strong as you will feel, and things are likely to get more difficult."

EXPLORE "What are your most important **goals** if your health situation worsens?"

 "What are your **biggest fears and worries** about the future with your health?"

 "What gives you **strength** as you think about the future with your illness?"

 "What **abilities** are so critical to your life that you can't imagine living without them?"

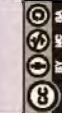
 "If you become sicker, **how much are you willing to go through** for the possibility of gaining more time?"

 "How much does your **family** know about your priorities and wishes?"

CLOSE "I've heard you say that _____ is really important to you. Keeping that in mind, and what we know about your illness, I **recommend** that we _____. This will help us make sure that your treatment plans reflect what's important to you."

 "How does this plan seem to you?"

 "I will do everything I can to help you through this."



Serious Illness Communication Guide

Example physician narrative

I met with Mrs. Smith today to have a serious illness conversation.

Prognostic understanding: overestimates prognosis.

I communicated with Mrs. Smith that her prognosis is several months to a year.

The patient's most important goals are to be physically comfortable and be mentally aware.

Her biggest fears are loss of control and finances.

The patient states being conscious and being able to interact with others are functions she cannot live without,

If the patient becomes sick, they are willing to use the following interventions: aggressive tests and procedures in order to gain more time.

She has had some discussions with family but the conversation was incomplete.

I recommended discussing it further with her loved ones. We filled out a MOLST form. Time spent discussing the patient's values, priorities and preferences for care was 40 minutes.

Pre-visit phone script for MA/RN

- ❖ *Hello Mrs Smith, for your visit on (date), Dr. ____ would like to touch base with you about how things are going with your health. This is a very important conversation so we always encourage patients to bring their loved ones/family/surrogate to the visit.*

Discussing prognosis when time frame is unclear

- ❖ *I am worried this may be a new baseline.*
- ❖ *I am glad you feel good now but things may change quickly.*
- ❖ *I worry that time may be short.*
- ❖ *Let's talk about worst case scenarios and best case scenarios.*

Billing codes

- ❖ Includes the explanation and discussion of advance directives such as standard forms e.g. future care a patient would want to receive if they become unable to speak for themselves.
- ❖ Can bill ACP codes multiple times as long as there is a documented change in health status or directives for EOL care

99497 30 min F2F with pt/family/surrogate

99498 > 30 minutes