

DELIVERING SERIOUS NEWS



No one likes to be the bearer of serious news—but in health care, it's part of the job. Fortunately, there's a simple framework to help us get through it.

Medical training is full of mnemonic devices—quick techniques that help us remember what to do. **SPIKES** is an easy mnemonic any healthcare professional can use to deliver any serious news to a patient, fellow team member or visitor.

SPIKES

Setting • **P**erception/Perspective • **I**nvitation • **K**nowledge • **E**mpathy/Emotion • **S**ummary/Strategy

SETTING

- Right people
- Right place, consider privacy
- Sit down and minimize interruptions
- Time constraints

PERCEPTION/PERSPECTIVE

- Ask - Tell - Ask
 - “Tell me what you know so far, so that we're on the same page...”

INVITATION

- “Would it be helpful for you to know what to expect from here with your illness?”
- “Would it be OK if we talk about some serious issues with your care?”

KNOWLEDGE

- Headline
- Say it, then stop
- Only small chunks of info
- Use clear, simple language, avoid jargon

EMPATHY/EMOTION

- Expect emotion
- NURSE
- “I wish...”

SUMMARY/STRATEGY

- Simple and clear
- Reassure they won't be abandoned

HOW TO USE SPIKES TO DISCLOSE A MEDICAL ERROR

- S: Attending should be present.
- P: “Tell me what you know so far.”
- I: “Would it be OK if we talk about an error that occurred?”
- K Facts, no speculation—Deliver a sincere apology.
- E: Expect emotion.
- S: SUPPORT - Clear plan for caring for the patient and communication with team. Contact Risk Management.