

# Carolina Communication – Goals of Care Discussion Guide

This guide serves as a road map for goals of care communication. All steps and suggested language may not apply to every patient or discussion.

## 1. Set up the conversation

-- Ask permission

- I'm hoping we can talk about where things are with your illness and where they might be going – is this ok?

## 2. Assess illness understanding and information preferences

- What is your understanding of where you are now with your illness?
- How much have you heard about what to expect with this illness as we look towards the future?
- How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like?
- What questions do you have about your illness now and what to expect in the future?

## 3. Reframe when current treatment isn't working

-- Warning shot

-- Discuss prognosis

- I have bad news to share. I think that the current treatments aren't having the desired effects.
- We're in a different place now.
- I'm concerned that time may be getting shorter. (Express as a range – e.g., days to weeks, weeks to months...)
- I'm concerned that this may be as strong as you feel, and things are likely to get more difficult.
- One to two sentences are usually enough to start – pitfalls include: too much information, medical jargon

## 4. Expect and respond to emotion

-- Use of silence

- Name the emotion: e.g., It seems like you are \_\_\_\_; I'm sensing that you feel \_\_\_\_ about this news.
- Show understanding: I can only imagine how difficult this can be.
- "I Wish" statements: I wish that the cancer had responded to the treatment.
- Explore: Tell me more about that - what's going through your mind.

## 5. Explore goals and values

-- Sources of strength

-- Fears & worries

-- Critical abilities

-- Tradeoffs

-- Family

- Tell me about some of the things you enjoy doing. What gives your day quality?
- Given that time may be limited, what's most important to you at this point of your life?
- What gives you strength as you think about the future? What fears or worries do you have about the future?
- 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 more time?
- What does your family know about your priorities and wishes?

## 6. Summarize & align with values

- It sounds like [x,y,z] are the most important things to you at this time. Am I hearing you correctly?

## 7. Make recommendations & plan

- Given your goals and priorities and what we know about your illness at this stage, I recommend \_\_\_\_.
- What do think about this plan?
- We're in this together.

## 8. Document your discussion

- Write Advance Care Planning note so others can easily access content of your communication.