Sharing a cancer prognosis

10 top tips

Communicating prognosis requires skill and sensitivity and when done well offers hope as well as realistic expectations. GPs, nurses and researchers in the Macmillan Primary Care Cancer Framework have worked with patients and clinicians across Wales to produce this good practice guide to sharing a cancer prognosis with patients.

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MAC19358_Managing_Sexual_Dysfunction_tips

1 Be Prepared

- Update patient if you are running late
- Move patient to consultation room only when ready to begin consultation

2 Prechecks

- Encourage patient to invite a friend or relative
- Consider communication needs
- Ensure correct patient and correct notes

3 Environment

- Quiet private space
- Introduce everyone present to the patient and seek permission if additional health professionals are attending

4 Establish patient priorities and understanding

- Patient priorities may be different to yours
- Note language used

5 Bite Size Information

- Check understanding repeatedly
- Take note of non-verbal communication

6 Language

- Use the word 'cancer'
- Check patient's understanding of language used

Interventions may be Specialist,

7 Hope

- Be realistic but emphasise positive information and choices where possible
- Share plan and be honest about uncertainty
- Consider quality and quantity of life

8 Information

- Acknowledge research already done
- Offer accessible sources of information

9 Give time for questions

- Consider asking 'have we covered everything that matters to you?' and address concerns
- Advise on follow-up and communication plans

10 Documentation

- Document future plans
- Establish patient preference for communication preference
- Timely information to other healthcare teams including primary care

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