Improving Medical Trainees’ Confidence and Skills in Serious Illness Communication: Conversation Guide Training for Early Learners

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Conversations about patients’ goals and values improve care, but clinicians struggle with this

“You want me to do WHAT?!”
A conversation guide has successfully been used with practicing clinicians

Could this be used for medical trainees?

https://www.ariadnelabs.org/
What we did

• Modified the guide
• Ran multiple 2.5-hour training workshops for M4s (n=81) and IM residents (n=156)

• Collected learner evaluations re: training quality, self-confidence
• Tracked conversation documentation in EMR for 1 yr
The session was rated highly

- 86% of students and 91% of residents rated the session as “very good” or “excellent”
- >90% of learners would either recommend this training or intended to apply this to their practice

- “I really liked having a script to follow because it’s really hard to come up with what to say that is both compassionate but also moves the conversation along.”
- “Should have this training at least 3 times in medical school.”
- “Loved this session. Highest yield of block thus far.”
Trainee confidence increased in all communication domains post-training
Serious illness conversations increased 4.5-fold in the EMR

Trainee-documented serious illness conversations in the electronic medical record, 2018-2019
Discussion points

• A guide/script for training and clinical use is relatively novel
  • Enables learners to quickly develop competency in a “difficult” task
  • Is efficient: <10 minutes!

• Trainees more flexible than practicing clinicians

• Need to balance rigidity of the tool with allowing clinicians latitude for nuanced conversations

• Experiential learning/role-play is key
Next steps

- MedEdPORTAL submission pending
- Can this be done virtually? In less time?
- Larger, multi-site study: coming to MCW!
- Durability of response
- Move from learner confidence/attitudes assessment to skills evaluation (OSCE)...then patient outcomes
Thank you!

Questions?