



## Communicating in a time of crisis: COVID-19

For patients and their families, being kept honestly and openly informed will help to reduce anxiety in these uncertain times. Even if we, as health care professionals, do not have all the answers. Even if the conversations need to be conducted behind PPE or, in the case of families who are self-isolating, by telephone or by using other technology solutions. **We will all have to talk about dying.**

### Why is this challenging?

- Some health care professionals will be working outside their usual area.
- You may not have had these difficult conversations very often.
- You may feel out of your comfort zone.
- You want to do your best.

HOW CAN WE DO THIS WITH CONFIDENCE AND EMPATHY?

OPENNESS  
COMPASSION  
DIGNITY

### Where do we start?

- Keep it simple.
- Take time to think about the things you will say.
- You are not alone.
- Its OK to feel anxious and fearful.
- We do not get it right every time.

### Be prepared:

- Read the patient's clinical records.
- Consider the **ceilings of treatment**.
- Prepare to discuss **DNA CPR**.
- Outcomes of treatment: Harm versus benefit.
- Expectations of treatment: Realistic versus unrealistic.
- Ensure the setting or situation is as private as possible.
- Ensure that there are no interruptions.
- Use a framework such a **REDMAP** or **SAGE & THYME**.

**R** EADY

– Can we talk about your care?

**E** XPECT

– What do you know already? How much would you like to know? (Make no assumptions)

**D** IAGNOSIS

– This is what we know / don't know. (Avoid jargon)

**M** ATTERS

– What is most important to you? (Allow time, actively listen, give space for silence, be empathic, show you care)

**A** CTION

– This can help / This will not help.

**P** LAN

Let's plan good care for you and your family:  
– Summarise what you've said and explain the next steps.

REDMAP Credit: EC4H— University of Edinburgh & NHS Scotland



SETTING  
ASK  
GATHER  
EMPATHISE

- If you notice concern- create some privacy & sit down.
- “Can I ask what you are concerned about?”
- Gather all of their concerns– not just the first few.
- Respond sensitively “You have a lot on your mind”

TALK  
HELP  
YOU  
ME  
END

- “Who do you have to talk to or to help you?”
- “How do they help?”
- “What do YOU think would help?”
- “Is there something you would like ME to do?”
- “Can we leave it there?”

