

SPIKES

BREAKING BAD NEWS

SETTING

*Find a quiet location; private if possible.
Invite the important people to be present.
Have tissues and enough chairs.
Turn off the ringer on your phone/pager.*

PERCEPTION

Determine what the patient knows already

*“Tell me what you understand about your illness.”
“What have the other doctors told you about your illness?”
Look for knowledge and emotional information as the patient responds*

INVITATION

Clarify information preferences

*“Would it be okay for me to discuss the results of your tests with you now?”
“How do you prefer to discuss medical information in your family?”
“Some people prefer a global picture of what is happening and others like all the details, what do you prefer?”*

KNOWLEDGE

Give the information

*Give a warning... “I have something serious we need to discuss”
Avoid medical jargon. Say it simply and stop. (e.g. “Your cancer has spread to your liver. It is getting worse despite our treatments.”)*

EMPATHY

Respond to emotion

*Wait quietly for the patient.
“I know this is not what you expected to hear today.” “This is very difficult news.”*

SUMMARY

Next steps and followup plan

*“We’ve talked about a lot of things today, can you please tell me what you understand.”
“Let’s set up a follow-up appointment.”*