

Cancer Patient Journey

Communication Principles and Guidelines

Guiding Principle:

It is the responsibility of the health care system, and all people within its employ, to seek out the patient's voice and to actively hear that voice. All patient voices are important. Not all patients will have the ability to self-advocate in order to have their communication needs met. It is the responsibility of the system to ensure **all** patients communication needs are met proactively, not only those patients whom are able to self-advocate. Open communication with patients should begin at the outset of the patient's journey and be sustained throughout the patient's journey. Every person with cancer will have different communication needs. Communication approaches should be customized to the individual patient's needs.

Guidelines

Communication with patients should:

- Be individualized.
- Be truthful and transparent.
- Be consistent.
- Be in non-medical jargon – simple language.
- Be quality information.
- Be caring.
- Be active, interactive and proactive.
- Be ongoing, not one time.
- Be done in an appropriate setting and context.
- Be inclusive of patients and their families.
- Be culturally competent and responsive

In communicating with patients, providers and health care workers should:

- Listen to patients and act on the information provided by them.
- Understand what level of information the patient needs, and reflect that level of information to the patient. Provide the big picture when required, and the specific details when necessary.
- Ensure the patient and/or their families have the opportunity to ask questions, and ensure that it is safe for questions to be asked. No question is irrelevant or unnecessary.
- Make an effort to ensure demonstrated understanding by the patient and / or family.
- Ensure the patient is not the conduit of information between areas of care. It is the providers' and health care system's responsibility to transfer information between areas of care, not the patient's. Undertake the actions necessary to communicate between areas of care.
- Take responsibility for communication to the patient and see it through to the end of an active communication cycle by responding to questions. Do not delegate responsibility for your communication as a provider to an alternate provider. If communications with a patient are difficult for you, we recommend having a second person with you to support the communication. A health care provider's responsibility to communicate with patients is ongoing; it does not end when you have delivered your perceived "portion" of the information.
- Enable all communication to be two-way communication.
- Provide opportunities for patients to follow up with questions at later times.