



Mastering Communication with Seriously Ill Patients: Balancing Honesty with Empathy and Hope

Anthony Back, Robert Arnold, James Tulsky

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Physicians who care for patients with life-threatening illnesses face daunting communication challenges. Patients and family members can react to difficult news with sadness, distress, anger, or denial. This book defines the specific communication tasks involved in talking with patients with life-threatening illnesses and their families. Topics include delivering bad news, transition to palliative care, discussing goals of advance-care planning and do-not-resuscitate orders, existential and spiritual issues, family conferences, medical futility, and other conflicts at the end of life. Drs. Anthony Back, Robert Arnold, and James Tulsky bring together empirical research as well as their own experience to provide a roadmap through difficult conversations about life-threatening issues. The book offers both a theoretical framework and practical conversational tools that the practicing physician and clinician can use to improve communication skills, increase satisfaction, and protect themselves from burnout.

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