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Shared Decisions Difficult Conversations and Referral

Practical 02 / Communication role-play

Aim

Practise a supervised discussion that explains uncertainty, supports choice and prepares an appropriate referral.

Principle

Patients need understandable information about options and risks. Empathy, privacy, checking understanding and a named follow-up improve continuity.

Materials and Requirements

- Standardised patient and family role cards
- Fictional referral form and local pathway

Procedure

1. Ask what the patient understands and wants discussed and who may be involved. Use privacy and the preferred language.
2. Arrange a private space and ask whether an interpreter, support person or another team member is wanted. Confirm what the person understands and what they would like to know.
3. Explain the concern, uncertainty and next options in short pieces. Pause to acknowledge emotions and questions.

Continue with step 4 on the next page.

Procedure Continued

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4. Explain the main concern, available options and consequential uncertainty in short phrases. Pause after difficult information, acknowledge emotion and ask what matters most about the decision.
5. Agree the decision or next review within the student role and verify understanding with teach-back.
6. Discuss the person's preferences and options within the agreed student role. Request senior review where a decision needs clinical confirmation and record what is agreed or deferred.
7. Use teach-back to check the plan, next contact and signs needing earlier help. Adjust wording if the person gives a different interpretation.
8. Write a brief referral that includes purpose, urgency, relevant findings and the responsible receiving service.
9. Prepare a referral with patient or case code, reason, urgency, relevant findings and outstanding results. Verify where it will go, who is responsible and the next contact time.

Precautions

- Avoid making promises beyond the known plan.
- Use trained interpreting support when needed.

Observations and Interpretation

Shared Decisions Difficult Conversations and Referral

Observations and Record

Item	What to record	What it tells you
Preferences	Information needs, privacy and priorities	Personalises the discussion
Explanation	Options, uncertainty and teach-back	Supports informed choice
Referral	Question, urgency and responsibility	Enables practical follow-up

Worked Example

A fictional patient wishes to speak without a family member in the room. Offer privacy and check what they want shared later.

Result and Interpretation

Demonstrate an empathetic conversation and communicate a clear next step under supervision.

Viva Questions and Answers

Why ask the patient who should attend?

It respects confidentiality and their preferences.

What makes a referral question useful?

It states what the receiving team needs to assess or decide.

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