Breaking Bad News Simulation Training for Pediatric Residents and Health Care Professionals at Levine Children’s Hospitals

Atrium Health Levine Children’s Hospital

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Background
Patients and families who face devastating news look to health care professionals for help, guidance, and most importantly, compassion. The way in which difficult information is shared has a significant impact on the emotional well-being of the family as well as their ability to make necessary critical decisions. Despite knowledge of the importance of effective and compassionate communication, health care professionals have little formal training in breaking bad news.

Goal
1. Residents and providers exposed to the Breaking Bad News curriculum will feel better prepared, more confident, and feel less anxious when delivering bad news.
2. Providers will rank this program helpful in improving their ability to deliver bad news in a compassionate and effective manner post training.

Improvement Process
The Breaking Bad News Curriculum was implemented for a group of pediatric residents and nurse practitioners. Clinicians engaged in role play with experienced, improvisational trained, professional actors in various clinical scenarios. A team of instructors including MDs, NPs, and a parent instructor participated in a debrief with the participant immediately after the simulation to give feedback and stimulate self-reflection. Pre and post survey tools were completed by program participants to evaluate perceptions of intervention.

Results
The Breaking Bad News program was completed by a combination of 26 physicians and nurse practitioners. Participants post-intervention overall felt better prepared (33% felt well prepared pre vs 100% post), more confident (29% felt confident pre vs 100% post), and less anxious (79% moderately to severely anxious pre vs 42% post). All 26 participants ranked the program helpful in improving their ability to deliver bad news to patients and their families in a compassionate and effective manner. When asked when the program should be offered, 69% of participants felt it should be included in all three years of pediatric residency training.