

# Talking to relatives

A hospital guide to compassionate phone calls during Covid-19 outbreak



- 1 Introduce**
- My name is .....  
I am a .....
  - # **hello** my name is...
- Speak slowly**
- I'm calling to give you an update on your relative.....
- Open with a question**
- Are you okay to talk?
- Establish what they know**
- Can you tell me what you know about his/her/their condition?

- 2 Share information in small chunks**
- ✓ Use** Pauses, simple language
- ✗ Avoid** Euphemisms, jargon

- 3 Helpful concepts**
- **Honesty and uncertainty**  
*There are treatments that might help your relative ..... get better, such as giving him/her/them oxygen to help with his/her/their breathing. But if his/her/their heart stopped we wouldn't try to restart it as this wouldn't work*
  - **Hope for the best but plan for the worst**  
*We hope ..... improves with these treatments but we are worried he/she/they may not recover*
  - **Sick enough to die**  
*Your relative is very sick and getting very tired. He/she/they is/are now so unwell he/she/they could die in the next hours or days. I'm so sorry to have to tell you this over the phone, but sadly your relative ..... died a few minutes ago*

- 4 Comfort and reassure**
- *Is there anything you can tell me/us about your relative to help us look after him/her/ them. What matters to him/ her/ them?*
  - *We've been looking after him/her/them making sure he/she/they is/are comfortable*

- 5 Allow silence**
- **Listen**  
*I am so sorry please take your time*
  - **Empathise**  
*I appreciate it must be very hard to take this news in over the phone*
  - **Acknowledge**  
*I can hear how upset you are. This is an awful situation*

- 6 Ending the call**
- **Don't rush**  
*Before I end the call do you have any questions about .....?*
  - **Next steps**  
*Do you need any further information or support?*

- 7 After the call**
- **Debrief** by chatting to a colleague and these situations are hard

## Signposting for bereavement support for Hospital

- Please advise they make contact with the bereavement suite the next working day (not a weekend or BH) **York 01904 725445 / Scarborough 01723 385178** (08:30 to 16:30) – appointments for death certificate will be completed over the phone they WILL NOT be asked to attend the hospital.
- Please follow the SOP for appropriate after death care and sensitive removal of belongings.

- |   |                       |                            |                       |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ● Cruse Bereavement   | <b>0808 808 1677</b>  | ● Samaritans               | <b>08457 90 90 90</b> |
| ● Dying matters   | <b>08000 21 44 66</b> | ● Macmillan Cancer support | <b>0808 808 0000</b>  |
| ● <a href="https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/supporting-children">Mariecurie.org.uk/supporting-children</a> |                       | ● Winston's Wish           | <b>08452 03 04 05</b> |