

Presenting with patients and families: considerations for success

Patients and families provide valuable perspectives on cancer care. Their stories often contain emotional content that connects an audience to the presentation subject matter. The BC Cancer patient experience program offers these words of advice for preparing successful presentations.

Select the right presenter

Is the Patient/Family¹:

- Passionate about improving the healthcare experience for others?
- Willing to share information about their healthcare experience?
- Able to respect diversity and differing opinions?
- Able to use their personal experience constructively?
- Able to see beyond their own personal experience?
- Comfortable speaking to groups which will at times include physicians, staff and leaders?
- Open to feedback?



Prepare and practice together

We respect our patients' perspectives and we don't want to control the content of their presentations. However, it is risky to assume that patients will prepare a talk that will be concise, organized and compelling. Even patients who are experienced public speakers may not be familiar with the audience or context of the presentation. Take time to develop the presentation together. What is the outline/flow of the presentation? Who will speak to which topic and when?

Use templates and outlines

Help your patient or family partner prepare a brief biography that can be used in the conference program and/or during the introduction. Be wary of asking your patient/family presenter to "write a short bio" or "tell your story in five minutes." This is very stressful for most patient/family presenters. You can prevent this stress by using templates and outlines. See page 2.



Have a back-up plan

Things happen. Make a plan for what you will do if the patient or family presenter is unable to attend at the last minute. Will you present on their behalf? Will you show a video instead?

Review your assumptions

Orient the patient/family speaker to the event setting and what to expect. After presenting at countless events you start to expect some things: a lanyard with your name on it, water glasses at the podium, a moderator who will read your bio out loud, and audience members who may tune-out or leave early.



Reimburse out-of-pocket expenses

Will your patient/family presenter incur expenses to present with you? Ask them in advance if they will have travel or other expenses. Remind them to keep receipts. Your program should be prepared to cover those costs.

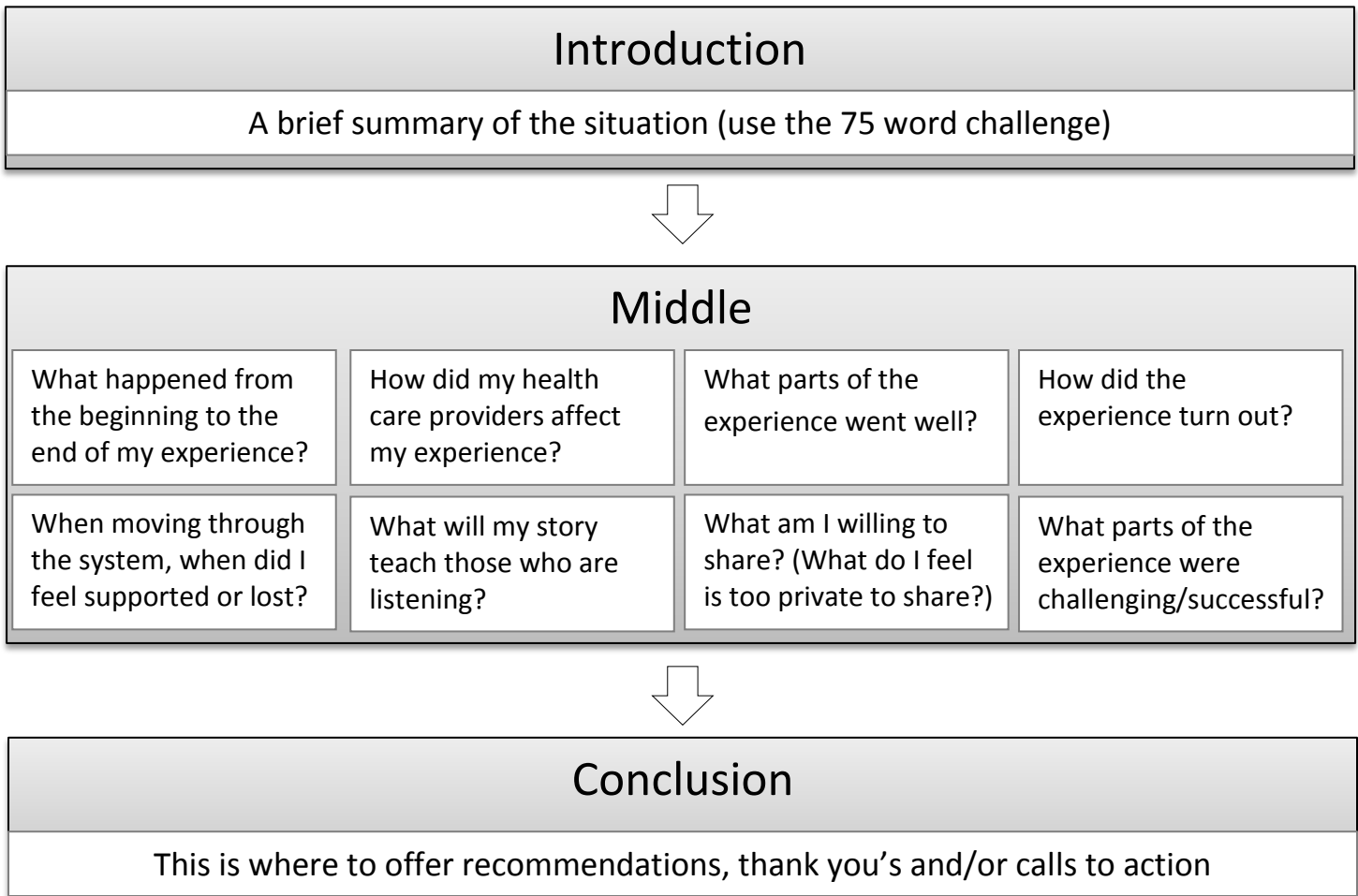
Outline for helping patients and families tell their stories

1. The 75-word challengeⁱ:

Draft and refine a summary of their diagnosis, treatment, and current situation in no more than 75 words

For example: “My daughter was born unable to breathe or swallow because of a birth defect. She has benefited from advances in medicine and informed, caring, skilled clinicians. She has also suffered from complications because of failure to appropriately resuscitate, inappropriate surgical intervention, inappropriate diagnoses—including meningitis—and other mistakes. I became a patient advocate partially for my own daughter, and to help other parents. I advocate for change in the largest Utah-based health care system.”

2. Presentation outline



ⁱ London Health Sciences Centre Quality, Patient Safety and Patient Experience. 2015. Patient and Family Advisors: Storyteller Toolkit https://www.cfhi-fcass.ca/sf-docs/default-source/on-call/storyteller-toolkit.pdf?sfvrsn=fa03d544_2

ⁱⁱ Morrise, L., & Stevens, K. J. (2013). Training patient and family storytellers and patient and family faculty. *The Permanente journal*, 17(3), e142–e145. doi:10.7812/TPP/12-059. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3783065/>