



Provincial Health Services Authority

SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE

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Systems Innovation (www.ariadnelabs.org) &
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

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Conversation flow	Patient-tested language
1. Set up the conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce purpose • Ask permission 	Set Up <p><i>"I'd like to talk about what is ahead with your illness and do some thinking in advance about what is important to you so that I can make sure we provide you with the care you want – is this okay?"</i></p>
2. Assess illness understanding & information preferences	Assess <p><i>"What is your understanding now of where you are with your illness?"</i> <i>"How much information about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?"</i></p>
3. Share prognosis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame with a "wish...worry", "hope...worry" statement • Allow silence, explore emotion 	Share <p>Prognosis: <i>"I want to share with you my understanding of where things are with your illness..."</i> Uncertain: <i>"It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your illness. I hope you will continue to live well for a long time but I'm worried that you could get sick quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility."</i> Time: <i>"I wish we were not in this situation, but I'm worried that time may be short as_ (express as a range e.g. weeks to months, months to a year)." OR Function: <i>"I hope that this is not the case, but I'm worried that this may be as strong as you will feel"</i></i></p>
4. Explore key topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals • Fears & worries • Sources of strength • Critical abilities • Trade-offs • Family 	Explore <p><i>"What are your most important goals if your health situation worsens?"</i> <i>"What are your biggest fears and worries about the future with your health?"</i> <i>"What gives you strength as you think about the future with your illness?"</i> <i>"What abilities are so critical to your life that you can't imagine living without them?"</i> <i>"If you become sicker, how much are you willing to go through for the possibility of gaining more time?"</i> <i>"How much does your family know about your priorities and wishes?"</i></p>
5. Close the conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize what you've heard • Make a recommendation; check in with patient • Affirm your commitment to the patient 	Close <p><i>"I've heard you say that ____ is really important to you. Keeping that in mind, and what we know about your illness, I recommend that we _____. This will help us make sure that your treatment plan reflect what's important to you"</i> <i>"How does this plan seem to you?"</i> <i>"I will do everything I can to help you through this."</i></p>
6. Document your conversation & 7. Communicate with key clinicians	