** SPIKES Protocol**

**for Giving Bad News**

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| **Step** | **Description** | **Considerations** |
| 1. **S**etting | Prevent any interruptions. Everyone should be able to sit comfortably. Allow appropriate time so the conversation is not rushed. | Ask the person who he/she would like to have present. Some patients may prefer to hear the news alone. |
| 2. **P**erception | Find out how much the person knows or suspects. Use an open-ended question or statement such as "tell me what you understand about your disease?" | Take note of the factual content of the person's response as well as the emotional content. |
| 3. **I**nvitation | Find out how much the person wants to know. Ask "how much information do you want to be given about your diagnosis and prognosis?" | The person's response may be affected by cultural and personal factors. The person might prefer that someone else in the family hears the information. |
| 4. **K**nowledge | Start with a “warning shot” by saying something like “I have bad news” or “the results of your test are not good.”  Share medical information. | A “warning shot” prepares the person to receive critical information  Respond using the person's words and consider the person's level of health literacy in determining the language to use. Educate by giving information in small amounts. Reinforce the information frequently. Verify the patient's understanding of the information given. |
| 5. **E**mpathy | Respond to the person's feelings. | Be empathic. Allow the person and any others present to express their emotions. Allow for silence as appropriate. |
| 6. **S**trategy/Summary | Plan for follow-up and summarize. | Reinforce strengths and coping abilities. Identify other sources of support. Plan for the next steps. Avoid leaving the person with a feeling of abandonment. |

Adapted from: Buckman, R. (2005). Breaking bad news: the S-P-I-K-E-S strategy. *Community Oncology*, 2(2), 138-142.