

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

ACGME Competencies Project  
**Communicating Bad News**  
Test Questions

Circle the best answer:

1. Before giving bad news, you should do all of the following except:
  - A. Ask the family if it is okay to tell the patient
  - B. Confirm the medical facts of the case
  - C. Find a private place with adequate seating
  - D. Identify people who should be present for support
  
2. An example of a useful opening statement when discussing bad news is:
  - A. *I never give up on my patients*
  - B. *Tell me what you understand about your illness*
  - C. *Your cancer is incurable*
  - D. *You must always have hope*
  
3. Before delivering bad news, it is important to find out how much a person wants to know because:
  - A. limiting the information that you discuss reduces your legal liability.
  - B. some patients prefer to designate a family member to receive information.
  - C. you can save time by avoiding lengthy discussions.
  - D. you are only obligated to give information that is specifically requested.
  
4. Which of the following is the *best* example of a “warning shot” to quickly prepare a patient to receive bad news?
  - A. *I have some bad news*
  - B. *I have your test results*
  - C. *You must have a lot of questions*
  - D. *The biopsy showed cancer*
  
5. Which one of the following is the *best* way to give a new cancer diagnosis?
  - A. *The biopsy appears to show cancer*
  - B. *The biopsy showed that you have cancer*
  - C. *The biopsy was malignant*
  - D. *The biopsy was positive for a malignant tumor*
  
6. When bad news is presented overly optimistically, out of fear of destroying hope, all of the following may occur except:
  - A. False hope for a good outcome
  - B. Improved ability to make difficult decisions
  - C. Inability of patient/family to set realistic goals
  - D. Patient/family mistrust of medical system

7. After you have given the bad news, the next step should be to
  - A. ask the patient for their reaction
  - B. listen actively and follow the patient's lead
  - C. provide a list of treatment alternatives
  - D. tell the patient that they should always have hope
  
8. Which of the following is an example of *legitimizing* a patient's emotional response to a new cancer diagnosis?
  - A. *Anyone with a new diagnosis of cancer would feel devastated*
  - B. *Don't give-up hope, we'll work through this together*
  - C. *Tell me what worries you the most*
  - D. *You must feel devastated by this news*
  
9. When using translators to communicate bad news, all of the following are true except:
  - A. Speak in short segments, using simple language
  - B. Speak directly to the patient
  - C. Family members should be used as translators whenever possible
  - D. Prepare the translator before meeting with the patient
  
10. When asked about prognosis, it is *best* to tell patients
  - A. an optimistic prognosis to help preserve a patient's hope
  - B. estimates should not be discussed because doctors are often wrong
  - C. ranges of time, such as "*weeks-to-months*," or "*months-to-years*"
  - D. you don't discuss prognosis because each patient is unique
  
11. When giving bad news over the telephone, a good first step is to
  - A. ask the patient if they have someone with them
  - B. ask the patient what they already know about their illness
  - C. clarify who you are speaking to
  - D. give a "warning shot"
  
12. Describe *two* personal challenges that you encounter in the delivery of bad news.
  - 1)
  - 2)
  
13. Describe *two* techniques that you have found helpful in delivering bad news.
  - 1)
  - 2)
  
14. How competent do you feel about effectively communicating bad news to a patient?  
(Circle your best estimate)

**Not Competent**

**Basic Competence**

**Expert**

1

2

3

4

5