

The purpose of this study is to explore how communication is used in palliative care. The study focuses on communicating prognosis and emotional responses to bad news. This interview guide is designed to understand these issues and their impact on communication in palliative care in northern Ghana. Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and we deeply appreciate your insights and contributions. We are committed to protecting your privacy and ensuring that any information you provide is handled with the utmost care and confidentiality. Your identity will remain anonymous. Any identifying information, including your name, job title, or organization, will be omitted or altered in any publications, reports, or presentations that result from this research.

Semi-structured interview guide

Study: Breaking Bad News in Palliative Care Settings in Northern Ghana

This semi-structured interview guide was developed by the researchers based on the study objectives. It was used to explore experiences, communication practices, and preferences related to breaking bad news among patients, family members, and healthcare providers in a palliative care setting.

Section A: Participant characteristics

Age:

Gender:

Participant group (patient / family member / healthcare provider):

For healthcare providers: Profession and years of experience:

For family members: Relationship to patient:

For patients: Diagnosis (if applicable):

Section B: Interview questions

The following questions were adapted according to participant group.

B1. Healthcare providers

1. Can you describe your experience with breaking bad news to patients and/or their families?
2. What approach or method do you usually use when delivering bad news?
3. Can you walk me through how you typically deliver bad news?
4. Do you follow any specific communication protocol (e.g., SPIKES)? If yes, how?

5. How do cultural beliefs influence how you communicate bad news?
6. What role do family members play in the communication process?
7. Have you ever faced a situation where family members asked you not to disclose information to the patient? How did you handle it?
8. How do you feel when delivering bad news?
9. What challenges do you face during this process?
10. How do you cope emotionally after delivering bad news?
11. What improvements do you think are needed in breaking bad news in your setting?

B2. Family members

1. Can you describe how you were informed about your relative's condition?
2. Who first communicated the bad news to you?
3. How do you think bad news should be communicated in your culture?
4. Do you think the patient should always be told the full truth about their condition? Why or why not?
5. What role do you believe family members should play when bad news is given?
6. How did you feel when you received the news?
7. How did your relative react (if applicable)?
8. Did your beliefs (cultural or religious) influence how you understood or accepted the news?
9. How did you cope with the information you received?
10. What would you want healthcare providers to do differently when giving such news?

B3. Patients

1. Can you describe how you were told about your illness?
2. Who informed you about your condition?
3. Would you prefer to know all details about your condition? Why?
4. Would you prefer your family to be present when receiving such information?

5. Did you understand the information given to you?
6. Were there any difficulties (e.g., language, medical terms)?
7. How did you feel when you received the news?
8. Did your beliefs influence how you reacted to the news?
9. How have you been coping since receiving the news?
10. What advice would you give healthcare providers about how to communicate bad news?

Section C: Closing

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?
2. Participants were thanked and reassured of confidentiality.