

Breaking Bad News:

Field Termination of Cardiac Arrest for EMS

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I TOLD YOU I WAS SICK
B. P. ROBERTS
MAY 17, 1929
JUNE 18, 1979

Objectives

- Discuss grief reaction and response to death
- Describe dos and don'ts of "death notification"
- GRIEV_ING mnemonic

Telling of a Death

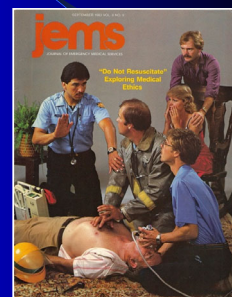
- One of the most difficult tasks for physicians (and EMS personnel)
 - This is a SKILL
- One of the most stressful life events for the survivors (and most remembered)

Should family be present during resuscitation?

Death Notification for EMS PA Statewide Protocols

- Dead on Arrival #322
- Out-of-Hospital DNR #324
- Termination of Resuscitation #3091
- University of Pittsburgh study
 - Survivors accept field termination

CPR is usually futile



Death in ED is Difficult

- Sudden, unexpected
- Suicide, homicide, accidental
- Lack of familiarity with survivors
- Reaction of survivors varied
- Gradual, expected
- USA disease, aging
- Familiar caretakers
- Reaction is grief

Grief

- Emotional and physical response to a death
- Culturally and demographically diverse manifestations
- Sometimes abnormal or pathologic
- Usually lasts 6-12 months
- Improvement in 6-8 weeks



Grief Responses

- Shock/high anxiety
- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression/remorse
- Testing
- Acceptance/reconciliation

Predisposed to Prolonged Grief

- Sudden, unexpected death
- Suicide or homicide
- Pediatric death
- Survivor guilt or extreme denial
- Family dysfunction
- Survivor with psychiatric disorder
- Survivor with drug or alcohol abuse

Survivor Responses

- Adaptive grief
 - open to ensuing events
 - able to meet their fears
 - open flow of emotions
 - non-ambivalent relationship with deceased
 - sharing without blame, resentment

Survivor Responses

- Action-oriented grief
 - a move toward organization & activity
 - a buffer from pain
 - assist, support vs. control, manipulation
 - work with the organizer
 - support other survivors

Survivor Responses

- Inordinately calm
 - usually represents a degree of denial
 - help initiate the grief response
 - encourage viewing of the body
 - spend a little extra time in dialogue

Survivor Responses

- Guilt and blaming
 - a common expression
 - “I shouldn’t have let him leave”
 - balance reality with support
 - don’t reinforce guilt or blaming



Survivor Responses

- Demonstrative behavior
 - verbal, striking out, self striking
 - usually an avenue of release
 - remain calm
 - support and reassure others
 - don’t hurry natural responses



Survivor Responses

- Violent behavior
 - most common in males 15-30
 - an attempt to regain control
 - do not counter with a threat
 - don’t approach rapidly or suddenly
 - assume role of advocate
 - provide privacy, don’t leave alone



Impaired Survivors

- Intoxicated, psych disorder, personality disorder
 - may have exaggerated, uncontrolled response
 - for EMS, consider CPR & transport
 - police/ security nearby
 - call additional family, friends

Survivor Guilt

- Very common
- Appropriate guilt
- Blaming
- Leads to prolonged grief
- Relieve guilt during death notification

Survivor Beliefs

- Survivors want questions answered
- Survivors generally want to be with deceased
- Survivors in resuscitation room?



Telling Bad News

- G gather
- R resources
- I identify
- E educate
- V verify
- _ space
- I inquire
- N nuts and bolts
- G give



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Delivering the News With Compassion The GRIEV_ING Death Notification Protocol	
G	Gather all family members
R	Resources such as chaplain services, family and friends
I	Identify yourself, name of deceased or injured patient, and state of family's knowledge of event of the day
E	Educate family about events that occurred in ED, and current state of loved one
V	Verify that loved one has died, use "dead" or "died"
_	Give them SPACE and TIME to absorb the information
I	Inquire if there are questions, and attempt to answer them
N	Nuts and bolts, ask about organ donation, funeral services, service belongings, offer family opportunity to view the body
G	Give them your card with your contact information, offer to answer questions that may arise later, and always return their call

GRIEV_ING

G – Gather

- The family or survivors
- Have “team” with you
- Find a private quiet space
- Be prompt

GRIEV_ING

R – Resources

- Call for support resources available to assist the family with their grief
 - Pastor
 - Family minister
 - Family and Friends
 - Funeral director



GRIEV_ING

I – Identify

- Yourself and your role
- Family/ survivors present
- Shake hands, sit/stand at eye level
- Identify deceased patient by *name*
- State you are bringing **BAD NEWS**
 - Fire the *Warning Shot*

GRIEV_ING

E – Educate (During Resuscitation)

- The family
 - Start from where they ended their story
 - If possible, use their terms
 - Avoid jargon
 - Use slow and steady steps
 - If needed, fire another warning shot
 - Check their comprehension frequently

GRIEV_ING

V – Verify



- Their family member has died
- *Be clear!* Do not use euphemisms
 - “Passed away” “Passed on”
 - “No longer with us”
- Use the words “dead” or “died”

GRIEV_ING

_ Space



- Give the family personal space
- Emotional moment
- Registration of information
- Tolerate silence
- Touching is OK
- Give them permission to cry

GRIEV_ING

I – Inquire

- Ask if there are any questions
- Answer them all
- Assess understanding
 - Elicit summary statements from them
 - Listen for the hidden question

Do:

- “I can’t imagine how difficult this is for you.”
- “I know this is very painful for you.”
- “You must have been very close to him.”
- “People really cared for her.”
- “I know you are feeling overwhelmed right now.”
- “Is there anyone that I can call for you.”

Avoid:

- Referring to “the body” or “the corpse”
- “It was God’s will.”
- “She’s gone and you’ll just have to make the best of it.”
- “You must be strong for your children.”
- “You’ll get over this.”
- “Aren’t you lucky that at least...”

GRIEV_ING

N – Nuts and Bolts

- Call coroner
- Organ donation
- Funeral services
- Offer the family the opportunity to view the body
- Offer to call friend or pastor

GRIEV_ING

G – Give

- Give them your card and contact information
- Offer to answer any questions that may arise later
- Always return or take their call

A leaf is released
from the arms of a tree
to glide through the air...
now totally free...

A journey to make-
a good-bye to us all...
a beautiful brilliance
we'll always recall.

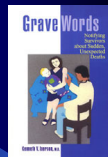
With deepest sympathy
in this time of loss
and sadness.

- G gather
- R resources
- I identify
- E educate
- V verify
- _ space
- I inquire
- N nuts and bolts
- G give



Resources

- Delivering the News With Compassion: The GRIEV_ING Death Notification Protocol – ACEP, MADD, US DOJ
- Grave Words, K Iserson, Galen Press



Summary

- Death notification is a skill
- Responses of survivors vary
- GRIEV_ING
- Permit family presence during CPR
- Relieve survivor guilt
- Tell directly, no euphemisms
- Encourage time with deceased
- Answer questions

