

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WHEN DELIVERING BAD NEWS TO FAMILIES

ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR EMOTIONS

- Acknowledge an unexpected and traumatic event has occurred
- Allow yourself to express your feelings with trusted colleagues
- Accept you may not have all of the answers about the event or diagnosis
- Recognize and anticipate emotional responses from family/ support persons

FORMULATE A PLAN

- Discuss with clinical team to get a consensus of the clinical picture for both mom and baby
- Identify key clinical points to be communicated in a clear and concise manner
- Identify key team members to be present (social worker, chaplain, note-taker, NICU)
- Establish who will be the primary clinical communicator for each patient
- Secure a quiet place to comfortably communicate with the patient's family
- Gather materials to provide: AFE FAQ's, paper, pen, business cards, hospital map
- Inform family/support persons of the meeting and include all vested family/support persons
- If parents, spouse or key support persons are not physically present consider having them listen by phone
- Assess and prepare for any language, cultural, and/or religious needs
- Locate a temporary place the family/support persons to gather for the next 24 hours

EXECUTE FAMILY/SUPPORT COMMUNICATION

- Confirm all vested family and support persons are present - if not, include them if possible
- Primary communicator to introduce themselves, provide handouts
- Encourage note-taking or audio- recording
- Introduce the team members and their roles
- Use lay language with empathetic tone- avoid dramatic language and statistics
- Present basic facts, current condition, brief definition of AFE (see below)
- Explain 1-2 next steps for the patient - avoid overwhelming them with too much information
- Assess their understanding and repeat any key information
- Identify who will be the primary family/support communicator and obtain contact information
- Establish when they can expect the next update
- Assess resources available to the family (if needs exists, identify possible solutions)
- Encourage family to review AFE FAQ's/ Next Steps and offer AFE Crisis Line (307-END-AFES)
- Describe how to access cafeteria, wifi, parking, resources nearby
- Document discussion in the medical record



WHAT IS AN AFE?

Amniotic fluid embolism (AFE) is an unexpected life-threatening complication. It can affect both mother and baby. It is thought to be the result of an allergic-like reaction to the fluid that enters the mother's bloodstream. This is a normal part of the birth process for most mothers. It can occur during labor or soon after delivery and can cause serious breathing, blood pressure, and bleeding problems.