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Evaluation of breaking bad news practice with simulated patient interviews at medical faculty

Ümmü Zeynep Avsar(1), Z Cansever(2), H Acemoglu(1), Ü Avsar(3), M Navruz(3)

(1) Ataturk University Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Education, Erzurum, Turkey

(2) Mevlana University Medical Faculty, Department of Medical Education, Konya, Turkey

(3) Ataturk University Medical Faculty, Department of Family Medicine, Erzurum, Turkey

Corresponding author: Dr Ümmü Zeynep Avsar, Ataturk University Medical Faculty, Medical Education, Erzurum, Turkey. E-mail: drzavsar@gmail.com

Background & Aim: Breaking bad news to a patient is one of the most challenging communication task. In most medical faculties where technical skills have a major importance, such as physical exam, the teaching of communication skills are not be in priority. But recently there is increased importance given to this issue and then it took place in the under graduate national core curriculum which published in 2014.

Objective: To evaluate breaking bad news practice with simulated patient interview in third year of medical faculty students as their self-assessment of interview.

Method: It is a descriptive ongoing study conducting at Ataturk University Medical Faculty. After theoretical breaking bad news lesson, third year medical students were asked delivering a cancer diagnosis to a simulated patient and this interview was videotaped. Data were collected through survey from students after simulated patient interviews. Survey were including questions that evaluate self-assessment of interview.

Results: Sixty nine of 125 students (55.2%) were female. A hundred eleven of students (88.8%) regard as a skill for breaking bad news. Ninety students (72 %), stated that breaking bad news lesson was a need and suitable. Only 17 students (13.6%) thought that theoretical courses were enough, 77 students (61.6%) thought that there should be simulated patient application. Self-assessment of interviews with simulated patient were analyzed with survey, there was no significant difference between genders ($p > 0.05$). Students felt competent themselves for first meeting (85.6%) and using understandable language. Students felt incompetent themselves for asking patient if they have any question (%13,6).

Conclusion: Students thought that breaking bad news is a competency and it is appropriate to teach with simulated patients interviews. They felt incompetent for asking the patient if they have any question. This problem can be overcome by repeating this practice in later years.