



8 Tips for Disclosing an Unanticipated Outcome

Disclosing an unanticipated outcome to a patient or a family/caregiver can be daunting and stressful. However, the following tips can help frame the conversation and provide useful reminders about essential disclosure information.

1. Use compassion, empathy, and good communication skills, including mindfulness of body language and eye contact.
2. Clearly communicate the facts as they are known at the time of the disclosure.
3. Offer an apology for the occurrence of the event if all of the facts and causes are not known. Offer an apology for the error if an obvious error occurred.¹
4. Explain the plan of action relative to either continued investigation or changes being implemented to prevent similar errors in the future.
5. Ask whether the patient or family/caregiver has questions or would like to clarify any information.
6. Offer to help with any additional counseling needs, and provide the patient or family/caregiver with the names of agencies they can contact to address their concerns or complaints.
7. Provide assurance that as more information becomes available, it will be shared with the patient or family/caregiver.
8. Identify a contact person who will have primary responsibility for continued follow-up with the patient or family/caregiver. This is a critical element in restoring trust and confidence.

Keep in mind that the disclosure may not be well received, and the encounter could potentially be volatile. Further, the existing clinical relationship might not be sustainable. If so, or if the patient or family/caregiver requests a different provider, create a plan for transitioning the patient's care.

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Facilitated by Danna-Gracey and insured through MedPro Group, a Berkshire Hathaway company rated A++ (Superior) by A.M. Best, and the largest healthcare liability insurer in the country, we have the ability to control our rates and coverage into the future with a financially sound and secure partner.

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