Pilot to Design an Observed Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) for the Communication Skill of Cultivating Prognostic Awareness (FR469-D)

Juliet Jacobsen, MD, Harvard Palliative Medicine Fellowship, Boston, MA
Jane deLima Thomas, MD FAAHPM, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA
Vicki Jackson, MD MPH FAAHPM, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

Objectives
- Discuss the developed case and scoring system that measures the skill of cultivating prognostic awareness.
- Discuss how we evaluated how well our program taught this skill to our interprofessional fellowship class.

Background: As palliative care develops as a field, palliative-care specific communication skills are becoming more clearly defined. Helping patients to cultivate prognostic awareness to make informed medical decisions is one such skill. This skill requires clinicians to disclose prognostic information honestly and empathically while titrating the disclosure to the patient's information preferences and enabling the patient to continue to hope.

Methods: We developed a case and scoring system for an OSCE. The OSCE was administered to 11 interprofessional fellows at the beginning and end of fellowship. The case and scoring system were adjusted based on our observations and fellow feedback during this pilot phase so that the scores captured the desired expertise. Statistical analysis was performed on a program level to evaluate the fellowship program’s effectiveness in teaching this skill.

Results: The final version of the OSCE has three parts. Part 1 contains six communication steps to cultivate prognostic awareness. Part 2 contains one global rating of expertise. Part 3 is the NURSE scoring system for empathic communication.

Discussion: An OSCE provided a standardized measure for our fellowship’s effectiveness in teaching the skill of cultivating prognostic awareness. In addition to being more likely to discuss prognosis, more expert communicators were observed to use more NURSE skills and to disclose prognosis iteratively, repeatedly titrating the prognostic disclosure to the patient’s information preferences and ability to tolerate the discussion and integrate the information.

Conclusion: Formal validation of the OSCE will require a larger number of participants, which we are in the process of accruing.