

YEAR 3 SHARING DIFFICULT NEWS

The scenario will involve you being a patient who is undergoing investigations and receiving serious diagnosis. You will join a small group of students some of whom will share difficult news with you about your possible and then confirmed diagnosis. The students will receive feedback from everyone – yourself, their peers and the tutor. Thank you for taking part in this session, your contribution is invaluable to the students.

Purpose of the session: Students to practice discussing difficult news with patient at different points in their healthcare journey

Patient – male or female

Name – Adina /Adrian Carmel

Age – 30s

DOB 12th November with year to match age in 30s

Today:

PART 1 Setting: GP surgery

Visiting GP with weakness in your left arm and hand in last week

PART 2 Setting: Neurological outpatient clinic

Following referral now attending neurology outpatients for results of MRI scan

How would you like the patient to play the role: i.e. angry, emotional, determined or several ways (please detail)

Concerned but you initially think you are overreacting. If possible respond in part 2 with more emotion - angry or upset

Background

PART 1

You have had weakness in your left arm and hand for about a week. You were busy at work and thought it would go away. But it was getting worse, feeling heavy and so you made the appointment a couple of days ago but since then it has improved and is almost back to normal now. Your grip not as strong but you are right handed so not too much of an issue.

You have not had any injury or any other reason you can think of to explain it.

You had something similar about 6 months ago but it came and went quickly and you didn't tell anyone about it

Another odd thing happen to you, you were a bit unsteady last year on holiday felt wobbly but just took it easy, thought maybe ears were blocked and it settled down so did not tell anyone.

You have seen a neurologist before when you had eye problems – blurred vision and sore eye three or four years ago they said it was optic neuritis and would settle down which it did without any treatment.

Your initial ideas and expectations

You were worried it might be something serious like a stroke or your nerves but now it is getting better think you were over reacting.

You expected the GP would take your blood pressure and check you over and that it would be nothing.

You begin to get worried when the GP asks you lots of questions about other symptoms you had in the past

Your health and lifestyle

You are otherwise fit and well only seen your GP for eye problems in the past 4 years ago – optic neuritis and to get oral contraceptive pill.

Only medication is OCP no allergies

Family all well pretty fit bunch (parents and sister)

No children of your own, partner has teenage kids you see at weekends

Occasional smoker – socially a few a week when out with work colleagues

Usually do the driving if out so don't drink much and not fussed at home so only really drink when on holiday.

Work as a hotel manager, long hours and late nights but love your job partner is the chef at the hotel.

Your reaction to the news that the GP is concerned it could be early symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis and wants to send you for a scan and to see neurologist.

There is no right or wrong way to react to this difficult news – this is the first time students have been asked to attempt this.

Your initial reactions could be one of;

- Denial. Now weakness has got better makes it less likely though doesn't it? Thought MS affected your legs not arms? Other symptoms all settled down on their own too rather than getting worse thought MS was progressive? How do all these different symptoms fit together? No one in family has MS so can't be? How soon can I get the scan and rule it out?
The student will need to be patient with you and seek to explore your concerns appropriately for you to move on.
- Upset. I did not expect this thought things were getting better? I've heard of MS and people end up in wheelchairs don't they? I don't know how to tell my partner, maybe I will wait until after the scan. The student will need to be patient with you and seek to explore your concerns appropriately for you to move on.

Your questions. Please ask questions if you are allowed space to do so.

Questions that may be appropriate:

- How long will I have to wait for the appointment?
- What do I do if I get symptoms again?
- What happens now, is there any treatment?
- What can I do to keep healthy?
- If I have other symptoms, will they settle down on their own like the others?
- Will the symptoms progress and end up with me being in a wheelchair?

NEXT STUDENT CONSULTATION

Background

Part 2 – 2 months later

Your GP referred you for an MRI scan to investigate unexplained symptoms, you have had it and come to the outpatient clinic to get results.

The weakness in your left arm and hand has got completely better now and you have no other current symptoms.

You are worried about the possible diagnosis the GP suggested multiple sclerosis and you have looked it up but it was a bit overwhelming and friends said best to wait and see rather than getting worked up about it.

Your reaction to the news that the MRI scan indicates that you do have Multiple Sclerosis

There is no right or wrong way to react to this difficult news – this is the first-time students have been asked to attempt this.

Your initial reactions should follow on from Part 1 so it depends on how the GP consultation was conducted and if possible please be more emotional in part 2 if possible. Your reaction could include;

- Denial / Angry. I just can't believe it, are you sure? does the scan show it is definitely MS? I did not have any symptoms when I had the scan so can't show anything? Nobody had mentioned MS when I had all the other symptoms, so they did not think it was MS, so you could be wrong? student will need to be patient with you and seek to explore your concerns appropriately for you to move on.
- Upset. I had convinced myself it was nothing and tried not to believe it was possible. This is my worse nightmare, how am I going to cope? I do not want to end up in a wheelchair? I wish I had brought Geoff my partner with me, his dad was in a wheelchair (amputee) and he would not be able to cope if that happened to me. Will I have to give up work?. The student will need to be patient with you and seek to explore your concerns appropriately for you to move on.

Your questions. Please ask questions if you are allowed space to do so.

Questions that may be appropriate:

- What do I do if I get symptoms again?
- What happens now, is there any treatment?
- What can I do to keep healthy?
- If I have other symptoms, will they settle down on their own like the others?
- Will the symptoms progress and end up with me being in a wheelchair?
- Can I still drive?
- Where can I get more information?