



# Communicating Unexpected News: An Online Curriculum

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## BACKGROUND

- The ability to communicate unexpected news effectively and empathetically is a **crucial** skill for healthcare professionals across various specialties
- Providers often bring their own **biases** to the table when framing news as “bad” when, from a family’s perspective, it may not be bad at all
- Shift the paradigm from “breaking bad news” toward “**sharing unexpected news**”

## OBJECTIVE

- To teach healthcare professionals how to deliver unexpected or challenging diagnoses **compassionately and clearly**

## METHODOLOGY

- **Content delivery:** Online lectures, videos, readings, case studies, personal reflection, and toolbox of practical skills
- **Assessment:** Quizzes, pre- and post-curriculum surveys, and peer feedback

## OUTCOMES

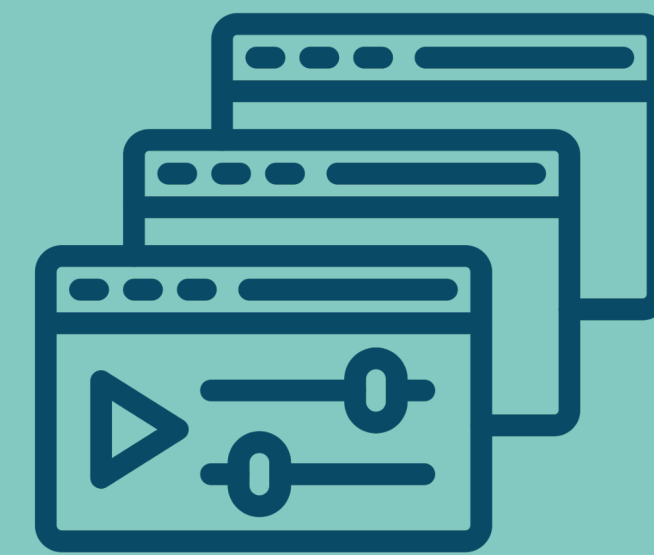
### Learner Development

- Improved communication abilities
- Enhanced empathy in patient interactions
- Better handling of emotional responses

### Evaluation of Curriculum

- Pre- and post-course assessments
- Participant feedback and testimonials

## CURRICULUM OVERVIEW



### Modules

1. Why is communicating unexpected news important?
2. Recognizing biases in medicine
3. Medical communication and the power of words
4. Theory of mind and compassion
5. Shooting the messenger and self-compassion



### Case Studies

Apply skills learned in the modules to 3 case studies of common unexpected diagnoses: Down syndrome, autism, and differences of sex development. Each case study includes a relevant and recent literature article, quiz questions related to the article, a real-life case scenario, and reflection questions designed to encourage learners to think through their responses to the situation.



### Toolbox

Interactive document provides a host of resources and approaches that were either used in or directly support a concept or approach discussed in this course



\***Jack's Basket** is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a mission to celebrate babies with Down syndrome and equip medical providers with tools to discuss the diagnosis of Down syndrome in an unbiased way.

To learn more, please visit our website at [jacksbasket.org](http://jacksbasket.org)

## BEST PRACTICES

1. Recognize that your words and conversation will be a **part of the family's story forever**
2. Remember to **congratulate the family on the birth** of their child
3. Consider phrases such as “**I have some news to share that may be unexpected**”
4. **Offer hope** that although it may not be what they expected, their child will be able to bring their family joy
5. Provide expectations of what **may need to happen in the short term**
6. Check the pulse of the conversation and **meet families where they are**
7. **Offer resources**, including linkages to families with children with the same diagnosis, if possible

## CONCLUSION

- This curriculum is intended to refine effective communication skills and better equip learners to **engage in meaningful conversations** when faced with similar situations in the real world to ultimately **improve the diagnosis experience** for families
- Future directions include addition of other diagnoses to the curriculum’s case studies, continued expansion and improvement based on learner feedback, tracking of curriculum efficacy, and publication of findings
- **Call to action** for healthcare institutions to adopt the curriculum

*"This curriculum is so fantastic. I think it adds so much value and will help many, many providers give better care ... The entire thing was well designed and professional."*

*"I was UNDONE by how amazing [the curriculum] was. It addresses the heart of becoming a better, more compassionate and effective provider."*

