

MODULE 3

Challenging Consultations

General Acute



Responding to strong emotions V1. (Slide 11)

Background

Patient Robbie O’Sullivan has appendicitis. He is a keen rugby player and is playing in his school’s grand final in two weeks.

Robbie was admitted to the emergency department this afternoon and has been waiting to go to theatre for 3 hours now. His parents are wondering what the delay is.

Brendan is the surgical registrar on call. The elective list is running late. He has reviewed Robbie who is stable following initial resuscitation and is receiving the appropriate treatment (IV fluids and antibiotics).

Robbie’s current clinical condition does not warrant an appendectomy during the night. Brendan will ensure that he is made a priority on the emergency list for tomorrow.

Say something like

“Now let’s look at a video of a hospital doctor conveying the news to Robbie’s parents that the operation has been cancelled and will have to be rescheduled for the following morning. In this film the parents are actually actors. Watch the video clip and identify what skills the doctor uses/doesn’t use.”



Skills

In this interaction, the doctor did not use good communication skills that would help him manage this challenging consultation. He:

- Did not identify himself by name
 - Did not begin the consultation by explaining his role
 - Did not sit at same level as the parents
 - Body language (poor non-verbals) – standing up/ holding coffee cup/arms folded/shrugging/facial expression is not warm/looks irritated/turns his back to parents while talking
 - Did not demonstrate active listening (nodding/ silence/pick up on nonverbals, summary and so on)
 - Did not demonstrate empathy (acknowledge or normalise concerns)
- Preparation: *'I haven't seen Robbie myself yet'*
Said that he had spoken to his colleagues about Robbie but didn't mention clinical handover
 - Inappropriate language used with worried parents
 - *'Like it's been a really busy day in theatre... we are still even going now with the elective list'*
 - *'Sure you know yourself, we have had a mental day now and I was just popping out to...'*
 - *'We will get him sorted'*
 - *'Try not to worry too much/try not to stress too much/if you want to move to other hospital that is your prerogative... its up to yourselves'*
 - *'We will get to him/we are at the mercy of the list'.*