



Advanced practitioner's skills in communicating bad news to patients: a service evaluation project proposal

Olga Richardt

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/swcsj>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

General rights

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please [contact the library](#) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

#400WORDS: CHIEF NURSING OFFICER RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP EDITION

Advanced practitioner's skills in communicating bad news to patients: a service evaluation project proposal

Olga Richardt¹

¹Surgical Emergency Nurse Practitioner, Surgical Decision unit, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Taunton, TA1 5DA, UK.

Email: olga.richardt@somersetft.nhs.uk

Submitted for publication: 13 December 2025

Accepted for publication: 17 December 2025

Published: 30 December 2025

Background

Breaking bad news is challenging in communication between healthcare professionals and patients. It involves sharing information that can change patients' view of their health (Bail *et al.*, 2000). These conversations can be emotional for patients and healthcare professionals. Nurses in the UK have strengthened the pillars of their professional practice to an advanced practice level. Advanced Practitioners (APs) are expected to demonstrate high standards of communication to support shared decision-making and empower patients in their care (RCN, 2025; NMC, 2024).

Guidelines on how to communicate bad news were originally designed for doctors, especially within oncology. Advanced Practitioners faced with such responsibilities often lack specific tools and structured knowledge to support effective communication (González-Cabrera *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, understanding the level of practice around communicating bad news, can help identify gaps in knowledge and current practice which might be addressed through targeted training opportunities.

Aim

To capture the experiences, knowledge and capability of APs to communicate bad news.

Method

A survey of APs in one hospital. Recruitment will target registered nurses in advanced clinical roles within the General Surgery Directorate. This includes Clinical Nurse Practitioners, Clinical Nurse Specialists and Emergency Nurse Practitioners and will be collectively referred to as Advanced Nurse Practitioners (RCN, 2025).

The 25-item validated *Nursing questionnaire on communicating bad news* will be used (González-Cabrera *et al.*, 2020). Additional demographic variables will be included: age, current workplace, role, professional experience in years, experience in giving bad news. Eligible participants must be working within the General Surgical Directorate,

including urology, colorectal, upper gastrointestinal and vascular services and those working in the Surgical Same Day Emergency Care Units, at two localities within the hospital. Forty to fifty nurses will meet the inclusion criteria. Advanced practitioners who do not have a nursing professional registration will be excluded. The survey aims to achieve a 70% response rate. It is acknowledged that response rates may vary between the two sites, particularly where direct contact with the teams is limited. Descriptive statistics, i percentages, means and standard deviations will be used to analyse the questionnaire data.

Discussion

The expected outcome of the survey will provide evidence regarding the self-perception of AP's knowledge and aptitude in the communication of bad news. This appreciation will help identify strengths and gaps in current practice that could be used to identify specific targeted training and support. Such initiatives across hospitals within the same Trust would strengthen nurses' communication skills, ensure consistency of practice across sites, and enhance patient care by promoting compassion, clarity, and shared decision-making.

References

- Baile, W.F., Buckman, R., Lenzi, R., Glober, G., Beale, E.A. and Kudelka, A.P. (2000) 'SPIKES – a six-step protocol for delivering bad news: application to the patient with cancer', *The Oncologist*, 5(4), pp. 302–311. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1634/theoncologist.5-4-302> (Accessed: 20 November 2025).
- González-Cabrera, M., Ortega-Martínez, A.R., Martínez-Galiano, J.M., Hernández-Martínez, A., Frías-Osuna, A. and Parra-Anguita, L. (2020) 'Design and validation of a questionnaire on communicating bad news in nursing: a pilot study', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(2), pp. 457. Available at <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17020457> (Accessed: 20 November 2025).
- Mahendiran, M., Yeung, H., Rossi, S., Khosravani, H. and Perri, G. (2023) 'Evaluating the effectiveness of the SPIKES model to break bad news – a systematic review', *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*, 40(11), pp. 1231–1260. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10499091221146296> (Accessed: 22 October 2025).
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2024) *Standards of proficiency for nurses*. London: Nursing and Midwifery Council. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/standards/2024/standards-of-proficiency-for-nurses.pdf> (Accessed: 14 November 2025).
- Royal College of Nursing (2025) *Recognition of advanced level nursing – position statement*. London: Royal College of Nursing. Available at: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/Royal-College-Of-Nursing/Documents/Publications/2025/October/012-324.pdf> (Accessed: 14 November 2025).



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence (see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>) which permits others to copy and redistribute in any medium or format, remix, transform and on a non-commercial basis build on this work, provided appropriate credit is given. Changes made need to be indicated, and distribution must continue under this same licence.