VCUHS Hematology/Oncology Fellowship
Communication Curriculum

**Description of Rotation or Educational Experience**

The Hematology-Oncology fellowship core communication curriculum is a longitudinal series of interactive sessions designed to develop the skills, attitude, and knowledge needed for effective communication. This curriculum is not a stand-alone clinical rotation. Rather, the curriculum consists of a collection of focused educational exercises including formal didactic training, simulation, observed patient/family interactions, and reflective writing conducted through the duration of clinical training. Annually, the fellows participate in a series of lectures and simulations conducted in collaboration with the VCU Theater department and the VCU School of Medicine Simulation Center to provide instruction in communication, body language, and information reception followed by experience with observed simulations. During scheduled clinical rotations, the fellow will participate in observed patient interactions. Finally, the fellow will perform self-reflection exercises designed to focus their attention on patient/family interactions in order to develop the skills needed to identify strengths, weakness, and limits of their communication skills. Though not designed specifically to provide progressive responsibility in the educational activities themselves, each fellow develops, in collaboration with the faculty, individualized learning goals and plan for the exercises based on their identified strengths, weaknesses, and limits.

- Responsible faculty: J. Christian Barrett, MD; Laurel Lyckholm, MD; Aaron Anderson; and Ted Baker

**Location:**
VCU Simulation Center; VCUHS Medical Center Hospital and Clinics; and McGuire VA Medical Center

**Length of Experience:**
Longitudinal experience integrated within the program.

**Educational Goals:**

- Appreciate the importance of verbal and non-verbal cues in communication
- Gain experience and knowledge in the communication of bad news
- Gain experience and knowledge in communicating goals of care and in obtaining informed consent

**Patient Care Goal**
Fellows must be able to provide patient care that is compassionate, appropriate, and effective for the treatment of health problems and the promotion of health. Please refer to overview of the fellowship curriculum for competencies/objectives for patient care.

Specifically, fellows in hematology and oncology will interact with patients and their families at times of high emotional and psychological duress. As such, the fellow must develop the knowledge skills, and attitudes needed to communicate effectively and compassionately. The fellow needs to be able to notice and respond to verbal and nonverbal cues in a manner that allows them to develop deep relationships of trust; to attend to the emotional, psychological, and medical needs of the patient and their caregivers; to convey information in a manner that is understandable in the context of education and culture; and to recognize the complex interconnectedness of human social networks

**Competencies:** Fellows are expected to

- Gather appropriate clinical information
• Synthesize information into a care plan
• Communicate effectively with the patient/family
• Partner with patients/families in the development and/or implementation of a care plan

Objectives: Fellows are expected to:
• Demonstrate effective integration of clinical information and patient/family input in the development and implementation of a care plan
• Demonstrate the ability to establish effective, compassionate, and appropriate relationships with patients/families necessary for the provision of effective patient care

Medical Knowledge
Goal
Fellows must demonstrate knowledge of established and evolving biomedical, clinical, epidemiological, and social-behavioral sciences, as well as the application of this knowledge to patient care. Fellows are expected to demonstrate skills in:

Competencies
• Acquisition of knowledge
• Analysis of information
• Application of knowledge

Objectives:
All fellows are expected to:
• Demonstrate a knowledge of the role, meaning, and effective use of various body positions in human communication
• Develop a knowledge of science related to human communication and capacity to receive information and apply this information to patient care

Practice- Based Learning and Improvement
Goal
Fellows must demonstrate the ability to investigate and evaluate their care of patients, to appraise and assimilate scientific evidence, and to continuously improve patient care based on constant self-evaluation and life long learning. Please refer to overview of the fellowship curriculum for competencies/objectives for practice based learning and improvement.

Competencies
• Identify strengths, deficiencies, and limits in one’s knowledge and expertise
• Set learning and improvement goals to address
• Participate in the education of patients, families, students, fellows, and other health professionals

Objectives:
All fellows are expected to:
• Demonstrate effective skills in self-reflection needed to consistently, accurately, and honestly self-appraise one’s knowledge and performance with the intent to identify the strengths, deficiencies, and limits of one’s knowledge
• Integrate feedback from direct observations of self; through self-reflection; and from external sources (including the patients and families) in developing goals and plans for improving one’s
**Systems Based Practice**

**Goal**
Fellows must demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context and system of health care, as well as the ability to call effectively on other resources in the system to provide optimal health care. Please refer to overview of the fellowship curriculum for competencies/objectives for systems based practice.

**Professionalism**

**Goal**
Fellows must demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities and an adherence to ethical principles. Please refer to overview of the fellowship curriculum for competencies/objectives for professionalism.

**Interpersonal and Communication Skills**

**Goal**
Fellows must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in the effective exchange of information and teaming with patients, their families, and professional associates. Please refer to overview of the fellowship curriculum for competencies/objectives for interpersonal and communication skills.

**Competencies**
- Communicate effectively with patients and families
- Communicate effectively with physicians and other health professionals

**Objectives:**
All fellows are expected to:
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively with patients and families across a broad range of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, including the effective ability both to receive and deliver information
- Demonstrate the effective recognition and use of verbal and non-verbal communication skills in communicating with patients and families

**Teaching Methods**
- Video-taped simulated-patient role play
- Self-reflection writing
- Patient care/clinical experience
- Didactic session
- Performance feedback
- Self-directed learning

**Assessment Method (residents)**
- Verbal feedback from peers
- Verbal feedback from trained actor
- Verbal feedback and review of taped simulated patient encounter(s) with the faculty
- Self-reflective writings
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<th>Assessment Method (Program Evaluation)</th>
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<td>• Annual program evaluation</td>
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<th>Level of Supervision</th>
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<td>• Direct supervision by the faculty (through one way mirror)</td>
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<th>Educational Resources</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Simulation center</td>
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