Title: Breaking bad news: a guide for dental healthcare professionals

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Abstract: Aim: Breaking bad news is difficult. It raises emotional issues for patients and, potentially, dentists. Most dental practitioners are faced with a situation, which they have to break ‘bad news’. In this study guidelines and recommendations for facilitating breaking bad news were reviewed and a suitable model was described.

Content: Databases of PubMed, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR), Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials, Scientific Information Database, CINAHL were searched with keywords “breaking bad news”, “communication”, “strategy”, “protocol”, “guideline” “dentistry” and “model” as the primary descriptors and limited the sources to English language articles with abstracts and guidelines; published since 1961. They were descriptive and analytical studies comprised of observational, experimental, quasi experimental and non experimental interventional studies. Recommendations and best models for facilitating breaking bad news drawn from these articles were explored, sorted into discrete categories, summarized and framed as the best model for breaking bad news. Although many articles have discussed the topic of breaking bad news, models or tools with repeating occurrence and focusing on dentistry were summarized.

Conclusions: The reference steps according to the most important models for breaking bad news with greater focus on dental topics have been presented. It is suggested that for more effective investigations, studies regarding interactional approaches in dentists–physicians relationships be conducted on breaking bad news interventions.

Key words: “breaking bad news”, “communication”, “strategy”, “protocol” “dentistry” and “guideline”

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