Case Study: Terminal illness and denial

It is vital the AHP recognises their influence on the patient receiving information regarding their illness, AHPs must ensure the patient has received a full understanding of their diagnosis as well the medical advice.

The AHP needs to assess for signs of denial, expression of denial may be a lack of response following diagnosis, de-fluctuating the severity of the illness or a reduced comparison. A lack of questions regarding the illness, future options or symptoms may also be an expression of denial.

We approach this case study in a non-confrontational manner, respecting and supporting the patient’s way of coping with the news. An ideal communication strategy to employ in this situation would be the SPIKES protocol; ensure the patient has received full information, with questions and ideally the involvement of the family/care givers.