

# paradigm changing

**SpeakSooner**  
a center for communication in medicine initiative



“...The Center for Communication in Medicine’s new [SpeakSooner] initiative is challenging all our assumptions about what can be accomplished.”

LIDIA SCHAPIRA, MD  
Director of Cancer Survivorship  
Stanford Comprehensive Cancer Institute,  
Associate Professor of Medicine (Oncology)  
Stanford University School of Medicine

The **SpeakSooner** initiative offers a platform to address a patient’s right to critical medical information.

Above, Palliative Care Physician Dr. Allen Hutcheson with patient Jan Martin Bopp



Dr. Schapira introduces the SpeakSooner community education program, “Illness Does Not Just Impact One Person”

**The need** for open and honest communication between patients, loved ones and healthcare providers is urgent.

Only **5%** of advanced cancer patients fully understand their prognosis

# urgent

## Center for Communication in Medicine's (CCM)

programs and tools help patients to actively engage in conversations about treatment options, quality of life considerations and supportive care needs, which can lead to informed choices and reduced healthcare costs. While other projects offer more narrowly focused end of life decision aids our goal is to prepare patients to **identify concerns and ask questions sooner in the course of illness.**

good communication  
is good medicine™



**Our mission is to educate patients,** families and healthcare providers about the key role of communication in improving healthcare delivery.

**66%** of patients with incurable cancer did not understand their treatment was palliative, not curative

# educating

**Building on 15 years of fieldwork** to improve communication in healthcare, the Center for Communication in Medicine developed the Difficult Conversations Toolkit (Video & Workbook), a guide grounded in the firsthand experiences of those living with illness.

**The Difficult Conversations Toolkit** helps patients think about and communicate their preferences for care—ensuring family and healthcare providers understand their values and goals, allowing for thoughtful and informed decision-making.

**SpeakSooner programs** incorporate Difficult Conversations materials for use in medical practices, communication skills training with healthcare professionals and community education workshops.

“... your Toolkit gives patients permission to discuss their questions and preferences with physicians directly. Your project is paradigm changing.”

ALEXI WRIGHT, MD, MPH  
Dana Farber Cancer Institute  
Brigham and Women's Hospital

**Our Toolkit prepares** patients to ask questions, express concerns to healthcare providers—beginning sooner in the course of illness.

Nearly **25%**  
of Medicare's entire annual budget  
is spent on acute care interventions  
during the last 30 days of life.

# preparing

Understanding prognosis, treatment options and quality of life issues allow patients to make informed decisions about their care.

**“There is no increase in anxiety or distress recorded as a result of telling patients the truth about their illness.”**

SE HARRINGTON, ET AL.  
*Journal of Community Oncology, 2010*

## SpeakSooner Community Education

**Programs** help patients and families to fortify relationships, identify needed supports and minimize regrets through open dialogue in planning of care.

# community



Ineffective communication takes a human and economic toll leading to unnecessary suffering for patients, regrets for loved ones and increased healthcare costs.

**“Did I do all that I could for my mother? The Toolkit has given me hope that questions and plans can be addressed early and with honest communication.”**

DENISE J.  
Daughter and caregiver

## THE URGENT NEED

**Our SpeakSooner Programs** offer a framework to address both a patient's right to critical medical information—sooner rather than later—as well as the challenges doctors often face in gauging a patient's readiness to communicate about issues surrounding serious illness.

# Speak Sooner

CCM offers the community a priceless gift. There is an overwhelming need and thirst for your expertise.\*

\*MIRIAM S., Community Education Program attendee

“Physicians, nurses, social workers are more fully engaged by listening to and reading patient comments. The workbook opens doors for better communication.”

ALLAN EISEMANN, MD  
Medical Director, Rutland Regional  
Cancer Center & Palliative Care.



PATIENT-CENTERED, DOCTOR-APPROVED

**The Center for Communication in Medicine**

has a 15 year history of improving communication between patients, loved ones and healthcare professionals. The SpeakSooner initiative expands our mission through educating communities about the patient's role in opening difficult and meaningful conversations. With access to our materials in mind, the Difficult Conversations Toolkit is now available online at: [www.SpeakSooner.org](http://www.SpeakSooner.org)

“Every patient should have this workbook; every social worker, nurse, doctor and chaplain should offer [it] to a patient and family to say: ‘I’m here; we can talk.’”

LINDA EMANUEL, MD, PHD  
Director, Buehler Center on Aging, Health & Society  
Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine

At some time in our lives we or a loved one will become a patient and how we communicate can influence the care we receive.

The first step is... SpeakSooner

LEARN MORE AT [SPEAKSOONER.ORG](http://SPEAKSOONER.ORG)



# SpeakSooner

ask questions now, live the answers  
a **center for communication in medicine** initiative



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