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SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE
A CONVERSATION TOOL FOR CLINICIANS

CONVERSATION FLOW	PATIENT-TESTED LANGUAGE
1. *Set up the conversation* • Introduce purpose • Prepare of future decisions • Ask permission	"I'd like to talk about what is ahead with your illness and do some thinking in advance about what is important to you so that I can make sure we provide you with the care you want - **is this okay?**"
2. *Assess illness understanding and preferences*	"What is your **understanding** now of where you are with your illness?" "How much **information** about what is likely to be ahead with your illness would you like from me?"
3. *Share prognosis* • Share prognosis • Frame as a "wish...worry" "hope...worry" statement • Allow silence, explore emotion	"I want to share with you **my understanding** of where things are with your illness *Uncertain*: "It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your illness. I **hope** you will continue to live well for a long time but I'm **worried** that you could get sick quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility." **OR** *Time*: "I **wish** we were not in this situation, but I am **worried** that time may be as short as _____ (*express as a range, e.g. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year*)." **OR** *Function*: "I **hope** that this is not the case, but I'm **worried** that this may be as strong as you will feel, and things are likely to get more difficult."
4. *Explore key topics* • Goals • Fears and worries • Sources of strength • Critical abilities • Tradeoffs • Family	"What are your most important **goals** if your health situation worsens?" "What are your biggest **fears and worries** about the future with your health?" "What gives you **strength** as you think about the future with your illness? "What **abilities** are so critical to your life that you can't imagine living without them? "If you become sicker, **how much are you willing to go through** for the possibility of gaining more time?" "How much does your **family** know about your priorities and wishes?"
5. *Close the conversation* • Summarize what you've heard • Make a recommendation • Check in with patient • Affirm commitment	"I've heard you say that _____ is really important to you. Keeping that in mind, and what we know about your illness, I **recommend** that we _____. This will help us make sure that your treatment plans reflect what's important to you." "How does this plan seem to you?" "I will do everything I can to help you through this."

6. *Document your conversation on the ACP record*

7. *Communicate with key clinicians*