DELIVERING UNEXPECTED NEWS IN OBSTETRIC ULTRASOUND

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TODAY'S TALK

Two reasons why I love researching news delivery in ultrasound

Overview of the INDIRA guidelines

INDIRA Coach: Current project
REASON 1: SONOGRAPHERS HAVE NO TIME TO PREPARE

• Existing news delivery frameworks based on the assumption of 'preparation'
• Sonographers have no time; parents watch their face as they conduct the scan
• Uniquely challenging
REASON 2: GOOD PRACTICE IS CATCHING ON

• In 2020, we published UK consensus guidelines for news delivery; in 2022, ASUM published parent-centred communication guidelines
• Now, for the rest of the world
• Lessons learned in sonography could also be applied in other areas of healthcare
28 people attended a day-long workshop
Healthcare professionals, academics, policy makers, lay experts
Discuss key issues and aimed to reach consensus
ASCKS

A: Avoid assumptions and loaded words
S: Set up the scan
C: Clear, honest communication
K: Kindness
S: Self care
A: AVOID ASSUMPTIONS AND LOADED WORDS

• Swap 'normal' and 'abnormal' for 'expected' and 'unexpected'
• Swap 'disorder' for 'condition'
• Swap all object comparisons for shape descriptors ('narrows/curves')
S: SET UP THE SCAN

• Ask all the questions at the beginning and outline how things will go
  ○ 'How many weeks are you?' 'Are you confident of your dates?'
  ○ ‘It is likely we'll need to do an internal scan today’
  ○ ‘I will be silent for a while, and after that, I will offer to show you the screen’
C: CLEAR, HONEST INFORMATION

• Share your findings simply but gently:
  ○ 'Unfortunately, I can't see a heartbeat today, and your pregnancy isn't progressing as we'd expect. This means you have had a miscarriage, but your body hasn't yet recognised what has happened'
• Use technical terms, but translate them.
  ○ '.... gestation sac, this is the place where the baby grows'
K: KINDNESS

• Name the emotions women seem to be experiencing and use wish statements
  ○ 'This must be really upsetting news, I wish things were different'
• Use the word 'baby'
• Express regret
S: SELF CARE

• Being a sonographer is a challenging job
• Delivering unexpected news is emotional labour
• Be kind to yourself, forgive yourself when the words come out wrong
Communication Coaching for Sonographers (CCS)

- Coaching programme to support sonographers with delivering unexpected news
- Designed with sonographers, for sonographers
- Aims to boost sonographer confidence
CCS: results

- 10 sonographers completed the intervention
- Significant increases in:
  - Communication skills (R1 m=4.85, SD=1.07; R3 m=6.73, SD=1.80, p=0.003)
  - Communication confidence (T1 m=28.00, SD=6.27; T2 m=32.80, SD=6.05, p=0.005)
- All respondents said they would recommend the intervention
- Most strongly agreed it was engaging (n=8; 89%) and imparted useful skills (n=8; 89%).
CCS: results

Overall communication skills

Confidence in communicating
Thank you!