

1.2 BEST PRACTICE FOR ANY CONSULTATION *(to be used with Sections 2-10)*

OBJECTIVE

To ensure open, effective communication throughout the woman's care to enable the woman to make informed, well supported choices, plus enable appropriate care planning by the multidisciplinary care team.

Before the consultation

CHECKLIST

- Ensure a quiet & private setting for the consultation.
- Allow sufficient uninterrupted time.
- Book a trained interpreter if required.
- Have appropriate information/resources on hand, eg. written material, diagrams, videotapes, tapes of consultation.
- Arrange for a support person to be present if needed/requested, eg. family member, Breast Care Nurse or culturally appropriate health worker.

General Interaction Skills

CHECKLIST

- Ask about preferences for amount & detail of information.
- Explain difficult terms & avoid medical jargon.
- Use a variety of media to provide information, eg. written resources, graphs and videotapes.
- Provide the woman with a copy of the information booklet 'All About Early Breast Cancer' 1996, *NHMRC National Breast Cancer Centre*.
- Actively encourage questions; check the woman's understanding by asking her to repeat important points.
- Offer to write down or tape key information, or send a summary letter as followup.

Emotional & Supportive Role

CHECKLIST

- Encourage the expression of feeling & concerns.
- Summarise the woman's concerns to convey empathy & listening.
- Address disturbing, embarrassing topics directly, with sensitivity.
- Provide information about support & counselling services.
- Encourage the woman & her family to seek support from family, friends, support services & local cancer organisations.
- Assess for symptoms of anxiety & depression.

Conclusion of the consultation

CHECKLIST

- Summarise & repeat important information.
- Acknowledge that the woman will be unlikely to recall all the information she has been told & indicate your availability to answer followup questions.
- Offer to assist telling others difficult news.
- Arrange follow up support & counselling as required (section 12.2).
- Keep the treatment team, including the general practitioner, appropriately informed of:
 - consultation outcomes
 - your perception of the woman's understanding of her situation.