**Family-Centred Cancer Care Conversations: The Talking, Telling and Sharing Framework**

**Step 1: Starting the conversation**

The first part of the framework uses a set of questions as prompts to help open up the conversation with parents and assess their attitudes, beliefs and readiness about sharing their cancer diagnosis with their children. This also provides healthcare professionals with a key opportunity to promote family-centred communication.

1. **Do you have any children?**
   - *‘No’ doesn’t mean the end of conversation. Check if they need help telling grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc.*

2. **How many? What ages: 0-2/3-5/6-12/13-18?**
   - *Children’s information needs and reactions to the news vary and are related to their developmental stage.*

3. **What do the children know?**
   - *Establish what the children know and have been told.*

4. **What are your thoughts about telling?**
   - *Ask about parents’ core beliefs on telling. Acknowledge it is challenging. Reinforce importance of honesty. Explore worries.*

5. **Are you ready to tell your children?**
   - **NO:** Parental resistance is common. If encountered, consider asking the following 3 questions.
   - **YES:**

   - **Who else knows?**
     - *If other family members and friends know, the children are likely to find out accidentally.*

   - **What is the alternative?**
     - *Provide parents with the fact that it is more harmful when children are left out or misled.*

   - **What about the side effects?**
     - *Ask how they will manage/hide the side-effects of treatment, as children are very observant of change.*

6. **Planning to tell**
   - *Assess parents’ emotional readiness to tell their children. Then move on to advice in Step 2.*

**Step 2: Communicating with the children**

The next part of this framework helps healthcare professionals give guidance to parents on when and how to communicate with their children about their cancer. It uses the 6W grid.

- **Why is it important to tell the children?**
  - *No matter how hard parents try to keep ‘things normal’, children will suspect that something is wrong. They will notice things such as whispered conversations and many more phone calls and texts.*

- **When is the best time to tell the children?**
  - *There may be no right time, so it’s looking for the best time. It’s important to tell the children as soon as the parent is emotionally ready, even if the treatment plan is still unknown.*

- **Where is the best place to start the conversation?**
  - *Encourage parents to choose a place:• Without interruptions. • Won’t feel rushed. • Able to talk and express feelings.*

- **Who should tell the children?**
  - *In principle a trusted adult, ideally a parent. If it’s a two parent family, it is usually best if both parents tell the children together. If the parents are too emotional, another family member could have the conversation.*

- **What do the children need to know?**
  - *What is cancer - use the word ‘cancer’. • What part of the body - be specific. • What is the treatment - if known. • What side-effects are expected. • What is going to change for the children.*

- **What words are appropriate to use?**
  - *Use age-appropriate language. • Don’t give false hope. • Communication is ongoing. • Words are only part of the telling – children pick up on body language.*