

## **About the Revised Serious Illness Conversations Guide**

Ariadne Labs' Serious Illness Care Program is excited to share with you a newly updated and revised Serious Illness Conversation Guide, which has been refined to be more inclusive and accessible for diverse patients with serious illness and their important people.

## **Engaging Patient, Caregiver, Clinician, and Communication Expert Perspectives**

Over 80 individuals provided input during the year-long revision process. We actively sought feedback from patients and caregivers who were people of color through the Patient Advocacy Foundation. We also collaborated with clinicians and communication experts from diverse healthcare settings, including federally qualified health centers, safety net hospitals, academic medical centers, integrated health systems, and non-profit community organizations.

## **The Guide**

The latest version of the Guide retains its original structure and flow while incorporating patient-tested changes to the language, making the tone of the Guide more conversational and emotionally safe. Responding to patient input, we have also added a question about hopes to the *explore* section of the Guide.

## **Navigating Hope**

Addressing hope during a serious illness conversation may be unfamiliar to some clinicians. Questions may arise, such as "What if I think the hopes are unrealistic?" and "How do I incorporate hopes that feel unrealistic into my recommendations?" It is important to remember that it is ok for patients to have hopes that we perceive as unrealistic, particularly in the early stages of their illness. Sometimes, hope represents a wish.

Earlier in the serious illness conversation using the Guide, you will have identified goals, which are often distinct from hopes. The key is to acknowledge that you have heard the patient and/or their caregiver(s), and it can be helpful to join them in their wish. For example: "I hear you wish you could have your health back - I really wish that was possible for you too! I also heard you are hoping to have your pain better controlled, that you're worried about coming back and forth to the hospital for radiation treatment, and that your main sources of strength are your faith and your daughter and granddaughter. Based on that, I recommend..."

Although inquiring about hopes after goals, worries, strengths, etc. may seem repetitive, patient advocates emphasized the importance of clinicians aligning with patients' specific hopes rather than relying on general statements like "I hope you will live well for a long time." This approach also allows the conversation to conclude on a positive note.

## **Closing Thoughts**

Our team at Ariadne Labs hopes that this revised Guide honors the voices of the health professionals, patients and caregivers who have helped create it and continues to facilitate meaningful conversations about what matters most. Thank you for your commitment to improving care for those experiencing serious illness.