

Narrative Review of Interventions to Teach Medical Students How to Break Bad News

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Introduction

Patient Perception

- Seifert, 2014 - only 46.2% of cancer patients in Germany are satisfied by how their physician broke the news of cancer to them.¹
- Brown, 2011 - only 21.6% of patients remembered their doctors being sympathetic, kind, and sensitive.²

Physician Perception

- Cheon 2017 - post-intervention in communications skills training, there were significant decreases in “emotional exhaustion,” “depersonalization,” and “personal accomplishment” – Maslach Burnout Inventory.³
- Orgel 2010 - 73% of trainees and 66% of attendings agreed the quantity and quality of formal teaching for delivering bad news was not adequate and a majority of residents and fellows rated their knowledge necessary to break bad news as insufficient.⁴

Specific Aims

We conducted a literature review of the interventions between 2004 -2019 that were focused on teaching medical students how to break bad news with the following goals in mind:

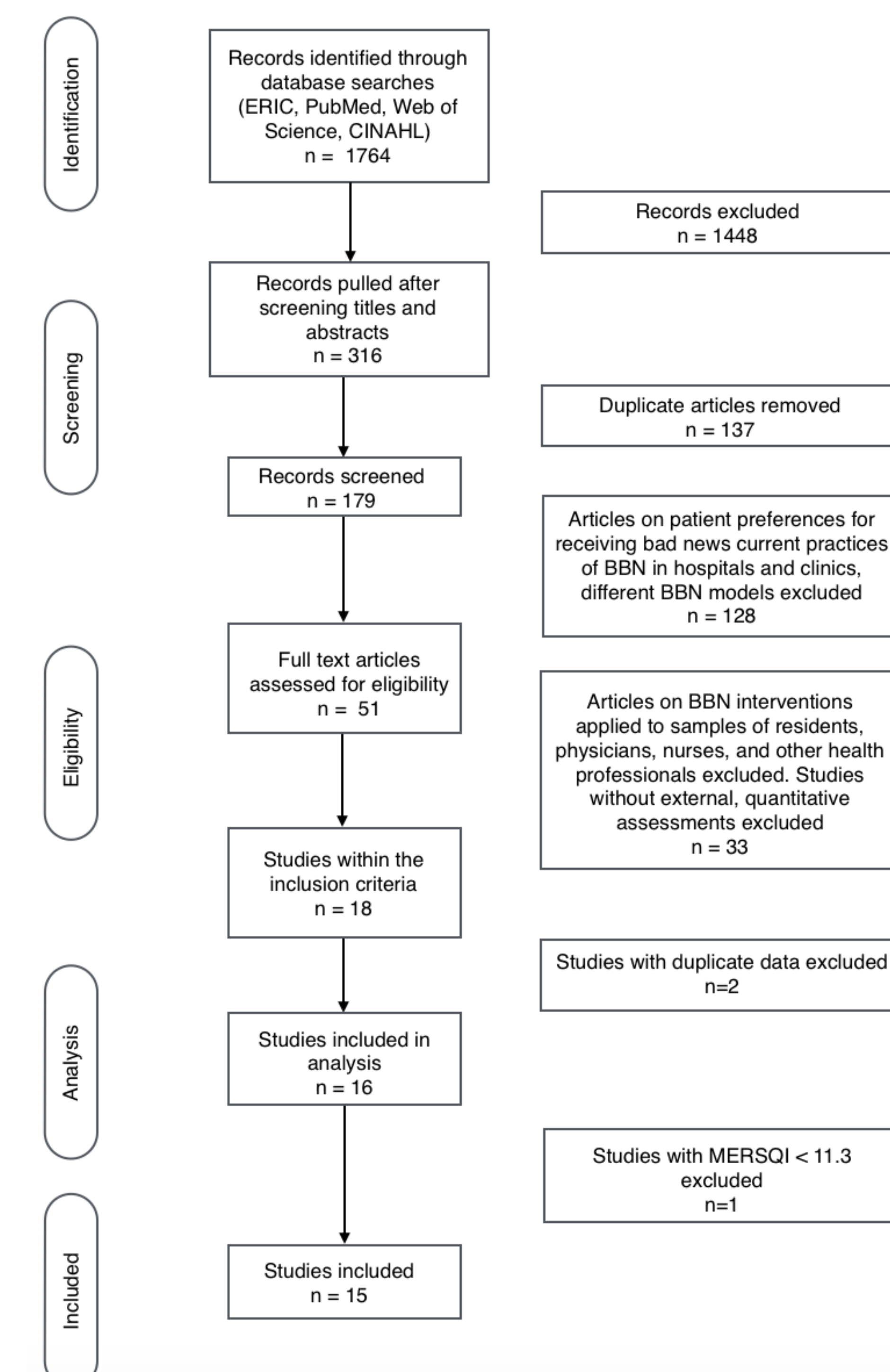
1. Identify quality research studies that discuss undergraduate medical education models being used to teach students how to break bad news
2. Use these findings to present recommendations to medical educators on best practices for teaching medical students how to deliver bad news

Conclusions/Practical Implications

- 3 pronged approach: didactics, role-play, and SP interview
- Longitudinal training interspersed in medical school curriculum
- Annotation of teaching videos with good and bad practices
- Role plays with feedback, placing emphasis on nonverbal behavior, perceived empathetic responses, and the use of explicit and implicit language
- Rigid training of SPs using videos of role play sessions or sample encounters to ensure high fidelity interview simulation
- Patient feedback of student performance during SP encounter
- Assessments evaluating global communication skills, delivery of bad news, and empathy separately

Methods

Search Terms: Breaking bad news, communication of bad news, delivery of bad news, life-altering information, medical student, medical education, medical training, curriculum, SPIKES



Results

Author, Year	Title & MERSQI ¹⁹ Score	Intervention Type
Kron, 2017	Using a computer simulation for teaching communication skills: A blinded multisite mixed methods randomized controlled trial 16.5	Didactic lecture on general communication principles, MPathic-VR - SPIKES
Gorniewicz, 2017	Breaking Bad News to Patients with Cancer: A Randomized Control Trial of a Brief Communication Skills Training Module Incorporating the Stories and Preferences of Actual Patients 15.5	Videos from 27 cancer patients describing challenging BBN experiences and SP interviews
Berney, 2016	Individual training at the undergraduate level to promote competence in breaking bad news in oncology 15.5	Video-taped SP interview and feedback
Schmitz, 2016	The Learning Effects of Different Presentations of Worked Examples on Medical Students' Breaking-Bad-News skills: A Randomized and Blinded Field Trial 15.5	Learning modules with video-based examples and hints - SPIKES
Burg, 2019	What Skills Really Improve After a Flipped Educational Intervention to Train Medical Students and Residents to Break Bad News? 15.5	DocCom Module 33 and small group workshop & discussion
Marko, 2015	Structured Teaching of Early Pregnancy Loss Counseling 15	2hr lecture & role-play - SPIKES
Wijnen-Meijer, 2015	Vertically Integrated Medical Education and the Readiness for Practice of Graduates 15	Vertical Integration of Medical Education
Bowyer, 2010	Teaching Breaking Bad News Using Mixed Reality Simulation 14.5	45min lecture, demonstration by faculty, 15min video - SPIKES
Westmoreland, 2018	A standardized low-cost peer role-playing training intervention improves medical student competency in communicating bad news to patients in Botswana 14.5	3hr workshop with lecture, role play, discussion, and reference cards - SPIKES
Vermynen, 2019	Development of a Simulation-Based Learning Curriculum for Breaking Bad News 14	4hr lecture, faculty demonstration, 3hr simulator based master learning - SPIKES
Schildmann, 2010	Teaching and evaluating breaking bad news: A pre-post evaluation study of a teaching intervention for medical students and a comparative analysis of different measurement instruments and raters 14	Teaching module (Cushing & Jones) & role-play - SPIKES
Wouda, 2010	The communication of medical students, residents, and consultants 14	Lectures, small group teaching, and role play
Baer, 2008	Breaking Bad News: Use of Cancer Survivors in Role-Playing Exercises 13	Lecture, large group activity, video, role play - SPIKES
Bounnad – Antignac, 2010	Videotaped simulated interviews to improve medical students' skills in disclosing a diagnosis of cancer 12	Lecture & discussion - SPIKES
Dikici, 2009	Teaching Medical Students How to Break Bad News: A Turkish Experience 12	Lecture, discussion, small group teaching with SPs

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