

NeuroTalk: Preparing Neurologists to Teach Serious Illness Communication

Across healthcare institutions every day, clinicians are meeting with patients with serious illness and sharing difficult news, discussing goals of care, and helping patients and families make medical decisions in the face of prognostic uncertainty. Serious illness communication skills are a core competency for many clinicians, though there is not a standard practice for clinicians to receive training in how to have these conversations.

Recognizing a need for neurologists to be trained in not only how to lead these conversations, but also in how to teach these skills, Drs. Claire Creutzfeldt and Breana Taylor from the University of Washington reached out to Vital Talk, a national organization that trains clinicians to have more meaningful conversations with patients and families—especially in the context of serious illness.

These efforts led to two major successes. The first was NeuroTalk Faculty Development, a new course created and facilitated by Vital Talk expert faculty, including Dr. Jessica McFarlin. Based on the core principles of Vital Talk Faculty Development, the course trains clinicians to teach serious illness communication skills. The NeuroTalk Faculty Development course used scenarios that are more specific to clinical practice in neurology and connected neuropalliative clinicians in a setting that fostered community and exchange of ideas. Over the course of two sessions ending in June 2026, 13 clinicians completed training in Seattle, Washington, and are poised to lead efforts to teach serious illness communication skills at their institutions and beyond.

The second outcome from these efforts is a pre-conference session at the upcoming INPCS annual conference. Attendees who want to improve their serious illness communication skills will be able to learn foundational communication skills through highly interactive, facilitated practice coupled with real-time feedback.

Details about the conference and the course can be found at:

[INPCS26: 6th Annual Meeting | International Neuropalliative Care Society](#)

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