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DISCLOSING THE TRUTH, INSTILLING HOPE

There is no fundamental conflict between our moral duty to preserve hope—to heal our patients with our words and not just with our medicines—and our moral duty to respect our patients as human beings who should be given the information they need to make their own choices about their lives. We as physicians can maintain the demeanor that calms and reassures our patients and still take the initiative in disclosing truth. And once we realize that this is possible, we can turn our attention to the real question, which is how to learn and how to teach the skills necessary to do it as well as possible.

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