

Media

Acrylic on canvas and digital illustration.

Word Choices is a mixed-media digital illustration that explores the importance of clinicians' word choices during encounters with patients. Clinicians often face ethical questions about sharing information with vulnerable patients, dimensions of which are represented by the illustration's content and colors. In the illustration, the subjective, objective, assessment, and plan (SOAP) note in the background represents a physician's framework for understanding a patient's clinical picture. Should deception be used if the intention is benevolent? Framing a diagnosis or other relevant information in a way that a patient or surrogate can understand and that is beneficial for a patient's well-being is important when considering this question. How this framing is done varies and thus is represented by a blank speech bubble.

Although a patient-clinician encounter can be based on lab numbers and information exchange, it's also important to remember the encounter's humanistic features. How a patient feels and responds can depend on how a clinician frames information and sets the tone of a conversation, so the speech bubble is highlighted in the foreground. This encounter's potential for complexity and intensity is suggested by bright colors.

How should clinicians explain a patient's diagnosis and condition? Like the empty speech bubble, this question can be seen as a start of a conversation.

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