

Table 1. AEIOU communication strategy.

Strategies	Sample sentences	Notes
Apologise for the situation	"I'm sorry you are affected by this situation."	Importance of a sincere apology. An apology that they are in such a situation is not an admission of legal liability.
Empathetic response upfront	"This must be shocking/distressing/upsetting for you and your family."	Acknowledge, validate and normalise their emotions.
Information giving with pacing	"May I go through with you what we know about the situation?" "Before I start, is there anything in particular you want to find out?"	Everyone has different informational needs. Pace the information in intervals. Check in regularly if they are following.
Openness and transparency	"I will share what I know about the situation." "This is an important question. As I do not have information on this, may I direct you to someone who can answer this query?"	It is important that the patient/family perceives openness and transparency. If we do not know the answer, direct them or offer a follow-up call/appointment.
Understanding concerns	"Is there anything in particular you are worried/concerned about?"	Active listening and allowing them to share their concerns is in itself therapeutic.