



Exploring and Expressing Empathy— Context Story

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Empathizing with the RO Staff

Clinical physicists are placed in a very common scenario

- Asked to evaluate the work of others
- Determine if the work is acceptable for proceeding to the next step of a process and, if necessary, trouble-shoot
 - e.g., a dosimetrist's IMRT plan
 - e.g., a CBCT acquired by therapists at treatment machine
- Requires the physicist to interact w/the RO staff in a way that **shows empathy**
- Should be a positive interaction that **fuels connection & teamwork**

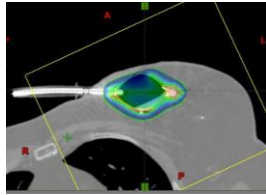
Video: www.theRSA.org talk 2013 Short: Brené Brown on Empathy

Brachytherapy Team

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Not the same patient

- Treat SAVI (strut-adjusted volume implant) patients
- Imaging to monitor SAVI geometry prior to every fraction
- We reserve use of CT for certain fractions

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For most fractions, brachy RTTs use a C-arm in the HDR suite to film these patients prior to treatment



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- RTTs setup patient, take films, bring films outside the room to display on a light box for physics review
- If physicist finds something that looks "off"...

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- An opportunity for physicist to display empathy:
- Avoid simply rejecting the films
 - Invite the RTTs to be a part of the review
 - Work with the RTTs to trouble-shoot
 - Take the perspective of the therapist**—go into room, see the setup, understand the challenges
 - Stay out of judgment** – avoid assigning blame



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- Otherwise...
- Disconnect between physicist and therapist**
 - Films are repeated again & again
 - Physicist is not understanding – has not taken the RTT's perspective
 - RTTs are feeling frustrated, unsure what else to do
 - The team is breaking down**
 - While the entire time...

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Not an actual patient

- Our patient is...
- Waiting and wondering
 - Laying still, arms up, feeling uncomfortable
 - Losing confidence in her treatment team
 - Physicist's lack of empathy has reached the patient ☹**

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