**Appendix A - ECCS-coding system**

IDENTIFYING EMPATHIC OPPORTUNITIES (EOS)  
The empathic opportunity begins with a clear and direct statement of emotion, progress or challenge by the patient:

**Statement of emotion:** The patient describes him or herself currently feeling an emotion. Emotion is defined as “an affective state of consciousness in which joy, sorrow, fear, hate, or the like, is experienced”. *“My biggest fear is \_ I don’t think I’m going to get ovarian cancer or breast cancer \_ but I do think that I’m going to get colon cancer.” “I’m just scared because I never went through nothing \_ I’ve never had nothing wrong with me.”*

**Statement of progress:** The patient states or describes a positive development in physical condition that has improved the patient’s quality of life, a positive development in the psychosocial aspect of the patient’s life, or a recent, very positive, life-changing event. *“I’ve been exercising more than last time when I had seen you.” “We just got married.”*

**Statement of challenge:** The patient states or describes a negative effect a physical or psychosocial problem is having on the patient’s quality of life, or a recent, devastating, life-changing event. *“But sometimes it’s hard just eating three ounces of meat, you know what I mean?” “I just haven’t had the energy to do my job as much anymore.”*

IDENTIFYING EMPATHIC RESPONSES (ERS)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Name** | **Description** |
| 6 | Shared feeling or experience | Physician self-discloses, making an explicit statement that he or she either shares the patient’s emotion or has had a similar experience, challenge, or progress. |
| 5 | Confirmation | Physician conveys to the patient that the expressed emotion, progress, or challenge is legitimate. |
| 4 | Pursuit | Physician explicitly acknowledges the central issue in the empathic opportunity and pursues the topic with the patient by asking the patient a question, offering advice or support, or elaborating on a point the patient has raised. |
| 3 | Acknowledgment | Physician explicitly acknowledges the central issue in the empathic opportunity but does not pursue the topic. |
| 2 | Implicit recognition | Physician does not explicitly recognize the central issue in the empathic opportunity but focuses on a peripheral aspect of the statement and changes the topic. |
| 1 | Perfunctory recognition | Physician gives an automatic, scripted-type response, giving the empathic opportunity minimal recognition. |
| 0 | Denial/ disconfirmation | Physician either ignores the patient’s empathic opportunity or makes a disconfirming statement. |

**Sources**

C.L. Bylund, G. Makoul, Examining empathy in medical encounters: an observational study using the empathic communication coding system, Health communication 18(2) (2005) 123-40.

C.L. Bylund, G. Makoul, Empathic communication and gender in the physician-patient encounter, Patient education and counseling 48(3) (2002) 207-16.