Teaching Effective Communication Skills to Subspecialty Fellows
Mary Jo Kasten1, Jeffery Rabatin1, Keith Mansel1
1Program in Professionalism and Values, Mayo Clinic

Introduction
Mayo Clinic is one of the largest academic institutions training subspecialty medicine fellows. Fellows come to Mayo Clinic Rochester with a variety of experience, formal training and communication skills. Our goal was to develop a communication workshop that would give fellows skills and practice in communication, and allow them to learn from our experienced Communication in Health Care faculty and each other.

Methods
We developed a 4 hour workshop consisting of didactic sessions followed by a small group skills practice session in a simulation center with patient actors. Learning objectives for the workshop included:

- Articulate the importance of effective communication in patient-centered healthcare.
- Demonstrate effective listening, using active listening techniques.
- Elicit and negotiate an agenda using “What else?”
- Apply relationship-building skills using “PEARLS.”
- Convey a meaningful diagnosis using “Ask-tell-ask.”
- Give bad, sad or unexpected news using “SPIKES.”

Large group teaching methods included: establishment of ground rules, paired listening activity, video viewing, faculty demonstration and facilitated discussion.

The small groups included fellows from a variety of programs, a skilled facilitator from our faculty and patient actors. The scenarios are developed with input from each fellows program director. Fellows are able to watch themselves on video, reflect on their experience and receive feedback from both their peers and the facilitator. The simulation center allows fellows to practice a communication scenario in a realistic setting while being videotaped and watched by their small group.

Fellows are asked to fill out a survey immediately following completion of the workshop.

Results
76 fellows completed the post workshop survey for an 84% response rate. The workshops were overall extremely well received by participating fellows. The workshop was ranked on a 1-5 scale with 1 being poor, and 5 being excellent and received overall mean scores between 4.47 and 4.66 for the didactic topics covered, 4.67 for balance between didactic and interactive exercises, and 4.63 for overall effectiveness of skills practice. The overall value of the workshop to their practice was scored as 4.61 and the overall quality of the experience scored 4.72. Over half of the responding participants reported being interested in practicing with additional scenarios.

The predominant theme noted upon reflection of the workshop by the fellows was the value of getting to work in the small group with patient actors.

Discussion
This workshop has allowed us to teach communication skills under very realistic clinical simulation, in a non-threatening learning environment using principles of adult learning. Many of the participating fellows are from small fellowship programs and an institutional workshop allows for an experience that individual fellowship programs could not otherwise offer. This workshop was able to meet the learning objectives and was highly rated. This workshop allows fellows to acquire basic skills and that provides a common language for future training. Future goals are to offer additional communication workshops to other subspecialty fellows/programs.