McElroy telephone calls

NO ONE LIKES HANGING AROUND IN A DOCTOR’S WAITING ROOM FOR AN APPOINTMENT, WONDERING IF YOU’RE GOING TO GET BAD NEWS. NOWADAYS, YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE TO. IN RECENT YEARS, IT’S BECOME MORE AND MORE COMMON FOR DOCTORS TO DELIVER DIAGNOSES OVER THE PHONE, INSTEAD OF IN-PERSON.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT THE NUMBER OF BREAST CANCER PATIENTS WHO RECEIVED THEIR DIAGNOSIS BY TELEPHONE HAS RISEN DRAMATICALLY. IN 2000, ABOUT 25% OF SURVEYED PATIENTS WERE TOLD OF THEIR CANCER DIAGNOSIS OVER THE PHONE. BY 2015, THAT NUMBER JUMPED TO 65%.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY MEDICINE JANE MCELROY BELIEVES THAT THIS IS JUST A SIGN OF THE TIMES.

“I could speculate that part of it is the digital age. I think that these days, people are more interested, more connected, more used to getting information instantaneously. And so that transcends to health care.”

NOW, PROFESSORS AT THE MU SCHOOL OF MEDICINE HAVE A NEW TASK: TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO HAVE POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS OVER THE PHONE. MU HEALTH CARE PHYSICIAN NATALIE LONG SAID THAT EMPATHY IS KEY IN THESE TOUGH CONVERSATIONS.

“You still need to really check in and make sure that you’re addressing emotions, being empathetic, listening, and then setting a follow-up appointment to talk about it in person is really critical.”

THIS WAY, DOCTORS CAN PROVIDE THE SAME CARE THEY WOULD IN PERSON, WHILE PATIENTS GET A FASTER AND MORE CONVENIENT UPDATE ON THEIR HEALTH.

I’M BRIAN CONSIGLIO, WITH A MIZZOU SPOTLIGHT ON SCIENCE.