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*Publication date:*  
2024

*Document version:*  
Final published version

*Citation for pulished version (APA):*  
Antonsen, K. K., Jensen, L. H., Poulsen, L. Ø., Lund, L., & Johnsen, A. T. (2024). *Effects of On-site Supportive Communication Training (On-site SCT) on doctor-patient communication in oncology: Study protocol of a randomized controlled trial*. Poster session presented at Kunsten at kommunikere // The art of communication, Middelfart, Denmark.

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# Effects of On-site Supportive Communication Training (On-site SCT) on doctor-patient communication in oncology: Study protocol of a randomized controlled trial

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## 1 Background

The quality of communication in oncology significantly impacts patients' health outcomes, as poor communication increases the risk of unnecessary treatment, inadequate pain relief, higher anxiety levels, and acute hospitalizations.

Additionally, insufficient communication skills training (CST) is associated with stress, low job satisfaction, and burnout among doctors working in oncology.

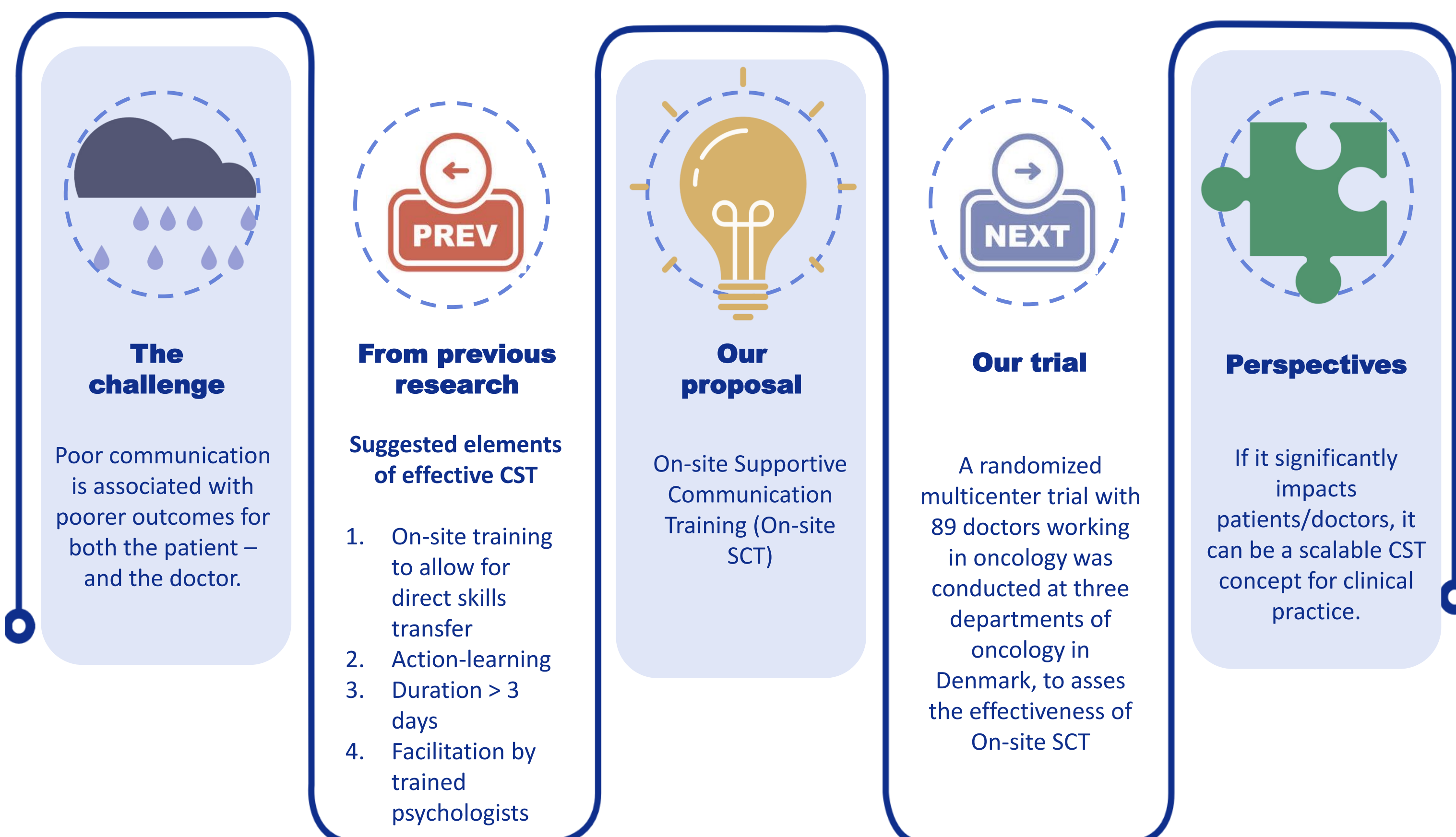


Figure 1. From challenge to perspectives. CST: Communication skills training

## 2 Research gap and aim

### Research gap

While acknowledging the importance of effective communication, the specific features of successful CST remain uncertain.

### Aim

Our aim is to bridge the gap by proposing a novel approach: *On-site Supportive Communication Training (On-site SCT)*.

## 3 Setting and method

This randomized multicenter trial was conducted at three departments of oncology in Denmark during the fall/winter of 2023/2024.

Eighty-nine doctors were randomized 1:1 into intervention and control groups. The intervention group participated in three full days of on-site SCT, facilitated by trained psychologists. The control group maintained standard practice.

## 4 The intervention

On-site SCT integrates knowledge from previous studies but is the **first randomized controlled trial to employ real-time doctor-patient interactions during CST**.

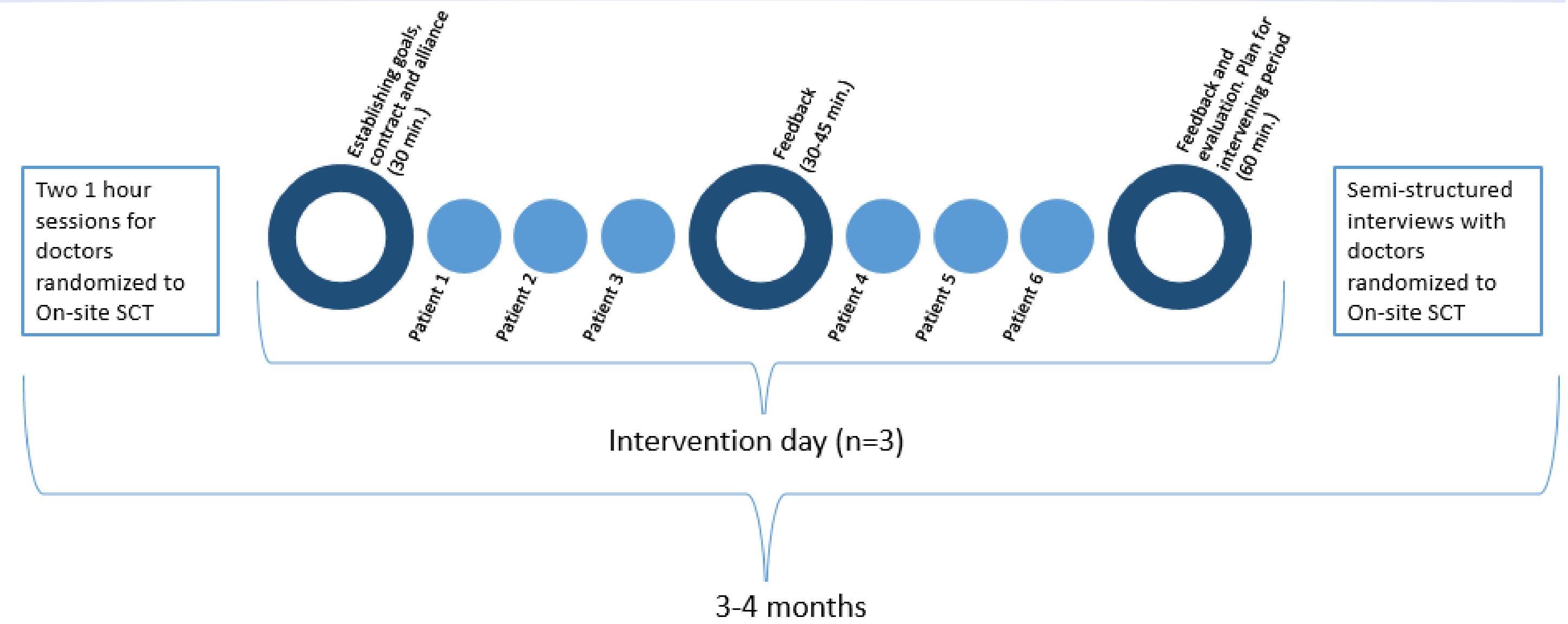


Figure 2: Overview of the intervention. On-site SCT: On-site Supportive Communication Training.

On-site SCT is based on action learning and focuses on imparting communication techniques, establishing a reflective learning environment, and providing emotional support with a compassionate mindset.

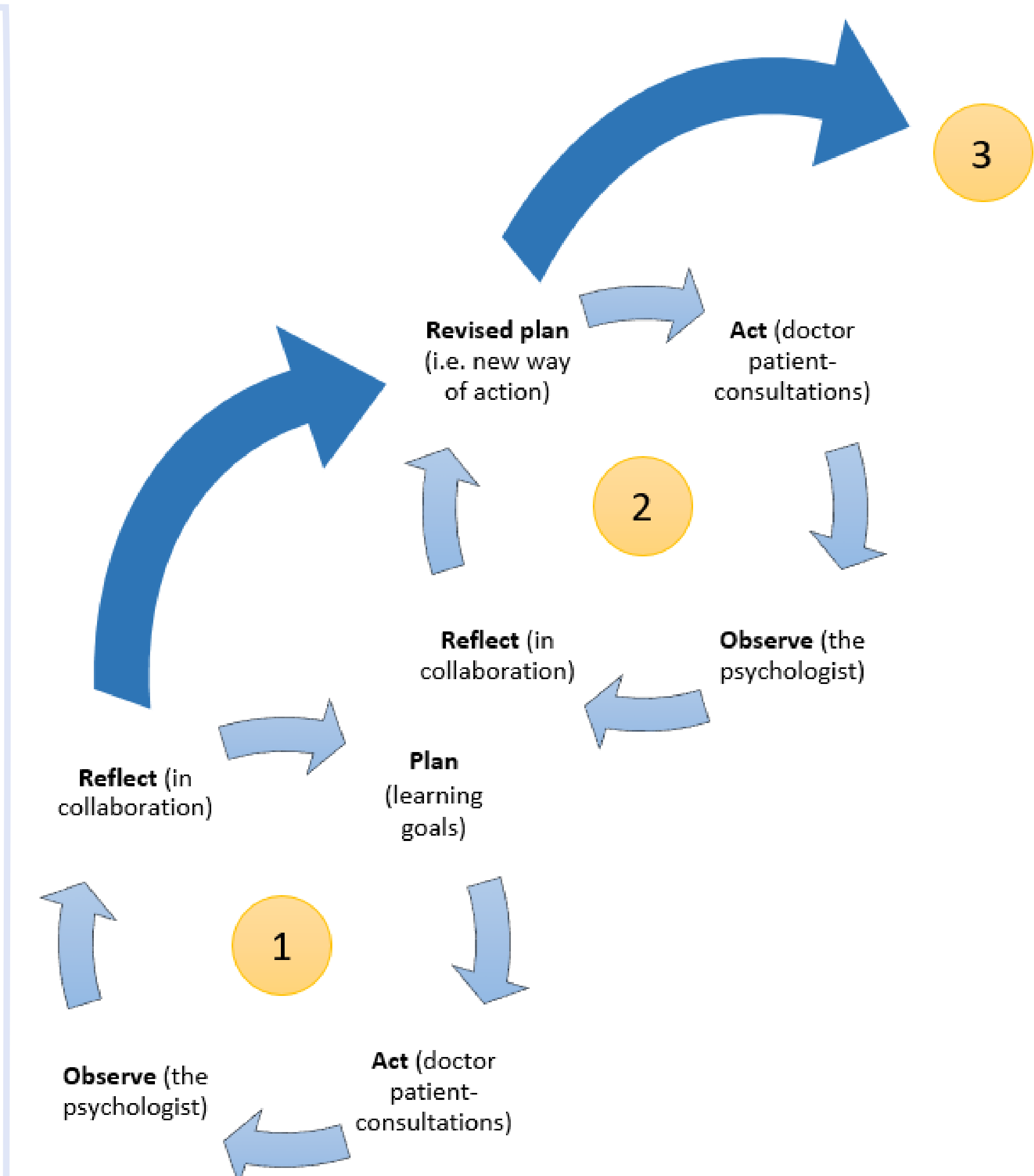


Figure 3: Action learning cycles during On-site Supportive Communication Training.

## 5 Results

Results are pending.

The **primary endpoint** is the change in percentage of items rated as “excellent” by patients on the validated 15-item Communication Assessment Tool.

**Secondary endpoints** include changes in doctors’ ratings of self-efficacy in health communication, burnout, and job satisfaction, measured by questionnaires.

**Qualitative interviews** have been conducted with the doctors after the intervention to evaluate its relevance, feasibility, and working mechanisms.

## Perspectives

If On-Site SCT proves to be feasible and efficient, it could become a scalable concept for communication skills training in oncology and other healthcare settings.

