

# Importance of communication skills in increasing patient satisfaction, improving treatment adherence and providing quality medical care to patients

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Communication skills are a very basic and at the same time very important part of any dealing that involves any two or more than two humans. Communication is the way in which one expresses himself in an overt or in a covert sort of manner. Communication is a means of advocacy that provides the avenue to which a positive impact can be made.<sup>1</sup> Communication is just like any other skill which can be mastered by proper technique and practice.

The role of communication skills in medical practice is of utmost significance. Correct and efficient use of communication skills has the potential to significantly increase the level of patient satisfaction. It has been shown that doctors with good attentive listening skills identify patients' problems more accurately and their patients adjust better psychologically and are more satisfied with their care.<sup>2</sup> Research has shown that doctor, who undergoes training to acquire good communication skills, can better satisfy their patients.<sup>3</sup> It is the patient dis-satisfaction that then leads to malpractice claims against the doctors.

Communication problems have also been cited as the most common factor in the initiation of malpractice suits.<sup>4</sup> Thus, improving communication skills is for the benefit of both doctor and the patient, culminating in a win-win situation. Moreover, patients adhere to their treatment plans more effectively when they feel satisfied after their consultation with a doctor.

Non-adherence to treatment is a major problem in getting the desired results in any health care system around the world. Not adhering to the treatment plan given and negotiated during the doctor-patient consultation results in poor health outcomes and an increased decrease burden. Despite proper treatment, doctors sometimes have to face legal consequences if

they have not communicated their plan of action properly with their patients. In a meta-analysis on physician communication and patient adherence to treatment, it was concluded that physician communication is significantly positively correlated with patient adherence to treatment. There is a 19% higher risk of non-adherence among patients whose physician communicates poorly than among patients whose physician communicates well.<sup>5</sup> Specifically speaking about pediatric illnesses, parental illness perceptions and medication beliefs should be identified during the doctor-patient consultation because they are strong drivers of treatment non-adherence.<sup>6</sup>

In short, appropriate and efficient use of communication skills by health care medical staff has a great role to play when it comes to providing quality health care. Doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff should properly be trained in appropriate communication skills during their interaction with patients. Communication skills training for nurses is very important and has shown to cause a profound elevation in the quality of nursing care.<sup>7</sup>

Proper courses on communication skills should be arranged and made mandatory for medical students, doctors, nurses, and paramedical staff. Doctors have shown improvement in skills over the course of the residency program with a multistep evaluative process in the hospitals where the communication skills curriculum has been designed and implemented.<sup>8</sup> Thus, it is the need of the hour that we focus our attention and resources on designing and implementing a proper curriculum on communication skills for the medical staff.

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