

# Communication in Health Care

Promote Health  
and  
Prevent Disease

# Educational Objectives

- **communicate more effectively with patients and families for their empowerment and self-management of acute/chronic health conditions**
- **use *both* information technologies *and* personal communication as tools, strategies, and processes for health promotion and disease prevention**
- **develop an action plan to use communication for improving public health in the community (focus: overcoming asthma disparities in different patient populations)**

# Effective Communication Requirements

- Cultural Competency
- Health Literacy (Linguistic Sensitivity)

# Cultural Competency

- Care delivery in a manner that is respectful of and sensitive to patient's background and health beliefs
- Cultural awareness
- Cultural sensitivity
- Cultural understanding
- Cultural management

# Health Literacy (Linguistic Sensitivity)

- the patient's ability to obtain, process and understand health information and services needed to safely care for themselves
- Low health literacy: medical misunderstanding, errors, increased hospitalizations, and poorer health outcomes

# Understanding Culture

The Marine  
With  
Airway Obstruction

# The Lesson

- Understand the culture of your patient
- Use what that understanding tells you in ways you communicate with your patient
- Only part of your skills is technical
- The other part is your human interaction
- Both are essential for a healthful outcome

**Love Thy Patient!**

Giving Anesthesia  
to my  
Neighbor

# The Lesson

- Scientific knowledge, technology and technical skills are not enough
- Our patients need our caring, compassion and personal communication
- The best therapeutic outcome results from a trusting personal relationship

# Confirm Meaning Understood

“What they hear is not what we say”

# The Lesson

- Be sensitive to the “health literacy” of our patients and their families
- Never overestimate the level of verbal or written understanding of language
- Use words and other communication tools (pictures) that are basic and fundamental
- Confirm what we mean was the message that was heard and understood

# The Lesson

- This is especially important in the clinical settings when acute situations or chronic conditions may cause fear and anxiety
- We must provide communication of information that people can trust, understand, and use to manage their health

Bridging the Cultural  
and  
Language Divide  
Speak Some Spanish!

# The Lesson

- What we need is CLAS!  
Cultural and Linguistic Appropriate Sensitivity
- It is important to listen and observe.
- Speak English clearly and slowly and/or try to speak another's language. This is a statement of caring, concern and commitment.
- It opens the door to communication and increases mutual understanding.

# The Lesson

- Despite language and literacy barriers, multiple clarifications can enable communication and get ideas get across.
- When information is trusted, understood, and used, the patient and family are committed and motivated as your care partner in the management of their health.

# Culture

- Attitudes, beliefs, values, norms of behavior
- Determine how we act, respond, think
- Cultural roots have deep ethical foundations of what we consider right and wrong
- Culture must be considered along with psychological, social, economic and environmental factors that influence health

# Culture

- Determines the ability of an individual, family or community to manage personal or population health issues
- Effective communication requires awareness, sensitivity and understanding of cultural differences and skills in managing them
- Professionals and patients/families need to appreciate and respect their experiences and differing perspectives and viewpoints.

# Understanding Culture in Home Care

- Professional Model: autocratic, paternalistic and “in charge”; expect patients & families to trust authority, understand, and comply with directions
- Ethical Principle: beneficence
- Under current delivery constraints in clinical settings, time limited for observation, communication and education

# Understanding Culture in Home Care

- Family/Social Model (Independent Living) : family in charge and in control
- Ethical Principle: Autonomy
- Health care professionals are invited guests
- Families want respect for all they face
- Need to develop relationship of trust with consistency of professional staffing

# Cultural Understanding in the Home

Bridging Cultural Differences

# The Lesson

- Adapt your attitude, behavior and communication to the care setting
- In the home, you are a guest!

# Communicating Health Information

The Personal Health Communicator

# The Lesson

- People need communication of information they can trust, understand and use to make decisions and take actions to manage health for acute illness or chronic health conditions
- At the time of “bad news”, they need special understanding as they often do not hear the message or understand directions
- Fear and anxiety filters out the “bad news”

# The Lesson

- People need personal health communicators (health advocates, coaches, coordinators, navigators) to help them understand information, access the system and identify available resources
- Personal health communicators can be health professionals (example: asthma educators)
- Community health workers assist disadvantaged populations to overcome health disparities

# Obtaining Health Information

The Personal Health Communicator

# The Lesson

- Communicating information requires listening and trying to understand
- Each person comes from a unique background and experience
- The influence of culture determines their beliefs, values, attitudes and behavior
- Each individual has their unique way of understanding and processing language

# The Lesson

- With time and development of trust, anyone can understand and use information to:
- Manage their health
- Navigate the health system
- Negotiate for the resources they need

# Using Health Information

The Personal Health Communicator

# The Lesson

- Communication requires not only access to information
- It also requires a person to help you understand how to use it!

Putting Communication into Action:  
Improving Public Health  
in the Community

Eliminating Asthma Health  
Disparities in Chicago



[chicagoasthma.org](http://chicagoasthma.org)

# Action Steps

- Conference on Asthma Disparities
- Obtaining Community Input
- Prioritizing Community Insights
- Working with the Community
- Implementing Community Ideas
- Evaluation of Community Concepts

# The Lesson

- Learn from the community
- The community has the insights
- The community understands their own culture and how best to communicate
- Gain trust and they will tell you what they really need and what works!

# Communication CAN Make a Difference

Asthma disparities in the community  
can be overcome!

# The Greatest Insight of My Life

- Culture makes a difference!
- Communication requires using language that people can understand
- We need to manage and work to overcome cultural and language misunderstandings

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