COMMUNICATION

Listening and Attending

December 2018
Objectives

• To explain the importance of good communication
• State how good communication can enhance patient care
• Define good communication
• Describe how the lack of communication training can cause professional burnout
• Name the essential skills healthcare workers need to have, to be able to communicate effectively
Communication

- All health and social care staff will be trained in communication regarding end of life care.
  End of life Care Strategy 2008

- “Good communication between health professionals and patients is essential for the delivery of high quality care”
  The NHS Cancer Plan 2000

- Talking about end of life care.
  Right conversation, right people, right time
  National end of life programme 2011
High profile reports all highlight the need for good communication

- NICE Supportive and Palliative Care for People with Cancer (2004)
- Cancer Reform Strategy (2007)
- High Quality Care for All – NHS Next Stage Review, Lord Darzi (2008)
- Improving Outcomes Guidance (2011)
Feedback from Patients

Patients give priority to:

• being treated with *humanity, dignity and respect*
• having *good communication* with health professionals
• being given *clear information* about their condition
• receiving the *best possible symptom control*
• receiving *psychological support* when they need it

The NHS Cancer Plan, September 2000
What is effective communication

• Involves the ability to draw out and identify patients concerns, worries and information needs.
• Involves tailoring information appropriately to identified needs and concerns.
• Involves enabling the patient to be involved in the decision making process.
Good communication

- Can influence patients emotional health, symptom resolution, function and physiologic measures i.e blood pressure and to decrease reported pain and drug usage (Stewart 1996)
- Increased recovery rates, a sense of safety and protection, improved levels of patient, satisfaction and greater adherence to treatment options (McCabe C, Timmins F. 2006)
Effects on the work force

• Insufficient training in communication is a major factor contributing to stress, lack of job satisfaction and emotional burnout in healthcare professionals (Fallowfield and Jenkins 1999)
Effective communication

• Despite the knowledge that effective communication is essential in health care there is evidence that in practice communication continues to be problematic (DoH 2000, NICE 2004)
• Complaints reflect a perceived failure of effective communication rather than issues about clinical incompetence.
Key complaints

1. Safety of clinical practices 22%
2. Poor communication / insufficient information 16%
3. Ineffective clinical practices / admin procedures 5%
4. Poor handling of complaints 5%
5. Discharge and co-ordination of care 4%
6. Lack of dignity and respect 4%
7. Poor attitudes 4%
8. Failure to follow agreed consent procedures 4%
9. Poor environments, poor hygiene 3%
10. Lack of access and disputes about clinical records 3%
Listening and attending

- Are by far the most important aspects of being a Health Care Professional.

- Everyone needs to be listened to

- If we can “listen” to someone, we can really help them

- Curiously, some people don’t consider ‘listening’ as ‘communication’. To them, it seems odd that part of communication involves being quiet. But listening is vital to good communication.
Attending

• It is the act of truly focusing on the other person.
• It involves consciously making ourselves aware of what a person is saying and of what they are trying to communicate to us
• It is concerned with our ATTENTION
Aspects of listening

• Linguistic aspects of speech
  • Refers to the actual words and phrases used

• Paralinguistic's
  • Refers to all aspects of speech that are not words – timing, tone, volume, pitch and accent

• Non-verbal aspects of communication
  • Body language – facial expression, use of gestures, body position, movement, proximity to others, touch
Impact of communication on patients

- Body Language: 55%
- Words: 38%
- Tone of Voice: 7%
Use of minimal prompts

• Whilst listening to a person, it is important to show that you **ARE** listening.

• The use of minimal prompts aids this.
  • Nod of the head, “mm’s”, “yes’s”

• Caution! Overuse can be irritating – sometimes such prompts are not necessary.

• Often, all the person wants is to be listened to and appreciates it when someone does.
Behavioural aspects to listening

• Sit squarely in relation to the patient/relative
• Maintain an open position
• Lean slightly towards the person
• Maintain reasonable eye contact with the person
• RELAX!
# Listening is communicating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Communicates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eye contact and attention</td>
<td>“you are important”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal prompts: “yes go on”. Head nodding,</td>
<td>“I’m still listening”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open questions “how are you feeling”</td>
<td>“I’m interested/concerned”</td>
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</tbody>
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Checking understanding
Blocks to effective listening

- Health professionals own problems
- Health professionals stress and anxiety
- Feel you do not have enough time
- Awkward and uncomfortable seating
- Lack of attention to listening behaviour
- Value judgements and interpretations on the behalf of the health care professional
Aids to effective listening

- Attention
- Suspension of judgement by the health care professional
- Attention to the behavioural aspects of listening
- Avoidance of interpretation
- Sensible use of minimal prompts
Problems in the working environment

• Lack of privacy, time and space
• Lack of support
• Lack of help when needed

Booth et al 1996
Listening and Attending

• Specialist counsellors are NOT the answer – the skills are needed by ALL Doctors and Nurses and other Clinical staff, and are easily taught and understood
• The skills of attending and listening are essential ones that can be used in every health professional’s job
• The skills are not limited to “counselling”, but can be applied to any interpersonal exchanges
• Development of these skills results in a better listener, but also a better practitioner
References


• End of life Care Strategy (2008)

• Fallowfield L, Jenkins V (1999). Effective Communication Skills are the Key to Good Cancer Care; European Journal of Cancer 35(11): 1592-1597

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  http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1337906/

- Talking About End of Life Care. Right Coversation, Right People, Right Time

- The NHS Cancer Plan