

Good Patient Communication



Patient-centered care encompasses qualities of compassion, empathy, and responsiveness to needs, values, and expressed preferences of the individual patient.

- Provide clear information, based on the patient's desire for details and literacy level
- Let your patient know how important good communication is to providing quality healthcare
- Provide your patients with pen and paper and encourage note taking during the visit
- Respect and respond to the patient's values, needs and emotions
- Always convey interest in your patient – face them when speaking and convey empathy and compassion

Cultural competence is a set of academic and personal skills that allow us to increase our understanding of cultural differences.

- Ethnocentrism – belief that your culture is the right way
- Ask patients about their culture's belief in healing & health

Benefits of Patient-Centered Care

Benefits to Patient	Benefits to Physician
Increased patient satisfaction	Decreased likelihood for malpractice litigation
Increased patient compliance	Increased patient loyalty
Improved self-reported health status	Increased patient volume
Improved outcomes in physical and mental functioning	Increased physician satisfaction

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services.

- 77 million Americans are unable to determine when to take a prescription medicine based on the drug label
- Be specific and concrete (e.g. “Take your pills with meals” instead of “Take them 3 times a day”)
- Avoid reviewing more than 3 issues/concepts at each visit
- Written material should be at a 6th grade reading level
- Repeat yourself – patients will appreciate it!

Communication

On average, physicians interrupt patients after 18 seconds during history.

Checklist for patient-centered communication:

- ✓ **Listen** with sympathy and understanding to the patient’s perceptions of the problem
 - What do you think caused your problem?
 - What do you fear about your sickness?
 - What kind of treatment do you think you should receive?
- ✓ **Explain** your perceptions of the problem
- ✓ **Acknowledge** and discuss the differences and similarities
- ✓ **Recommend** treatment
- ✓ **Negotiate** and mutually agree on treatment

Key Skills

Teach-back – Ask the patient to restate information in their own words, or to demonstrate understanding of key concepts

Plain language – Use simple language, without any jargon. Explain with everyday examples.

Diagramming – Draw concepts when possible, highlight important written material. This helps repeat key information.