Doctor-Patient Communication in Healthcare: A Scoping Review

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Abstract
Communication is a vital component in healthcare system. One of life's most essential activities is the ability to convey information. This transmission of information between an informer and a recipient is known as communication. For an effective communication, nature of the information to be shared, and engagement with technology; effective and efficient use of information and technology play a crucial role. As healthcare professional has privilege of meeting, treating and caring for individuals during what may be the most vulnerable period of their lives. For communication to be effective the message needs to be thoughtfully and clearly delivered wherein one should have the ability to express the technical words in a layman language to enhance patients understanding, cooperation, and satisfaction. A communication can be Verbal, Non-verbal, Formal, Informal, Technology aided and through signs and symbols. Communication is a tool which satisfy’s patient’s mental, psychological deal and enhances the effectiveness of the intervention along with adherence to the treatment protocol. Mode to communicate with patients varies as per their anxiety, need, severity and psycho-social understanding of the each patient.

Keywords: communication, information, patient, healthcare, verbal, formal, technology

Introduction
Communication is a vital component in healthcare system. One of life's most essential activities is the ability to convey information [1]. This transmission of information between a informer and a recipient is known as communication. It's a two-way street; both, the speaker and the receiver are required for a communication to occur. Both the speaker and the receiver must understand the message being communicated as well as the method of communication in order for communication to be effective. Communication by definition is, an interface it was employed as the foundation for describing and classifying verbal and nonverbal cues used by health professional and their patients during health-care exchange [2]. For an effective communication, nature of the information to be shared, and engagement with technology; effective and efficient use of information and technology play a crucial role [3]. As
healthcare professional has privilege of meeting, treating and caring for individuals during what may be the most vulnerable period of their lives. Doctor spending quality time listening and understand each patients are better prepared to address distinct issues as they arise, result with better patient outcomes [4]. In other words, it is crucial for the patient centric care. Healthcare professional may also be called upon to serve as a patient's counselor, and it's crucial to know when to seek assistance from other medical professionals. Healthcare professionals have a variety of responsibilities, including interviewing, instructing, educating, and counseling. Thus it is critical that a doctor be able to communicate effectively. On the flipside, poor/weak communication, leads to lack of information transfer, leading towards potential harm arise from misinterpretation, failing to follow treatment protocols and finally poor prognosis [5]. Communication failure occur when patients is being taken as a series of symptoms and tasks rather than as person with social and emotional needs.

For communication to be effective the message needs to be thoughtfully and clearly delivered wherein one should have the ability to express the technical words in a layman language to enhance patients understanding, cooperation, and satisfaction. Effective modes of communication in healthcare settings: Face to Face conversations, telephone calls, letters and e-mail all generate transactions that would fall into the communication space are in existence [6].

A communication can be Verbal, Non-verbal, Formal, Informal, Technology aided and through signs and symbols are few ways to express in healthcare settings [7].

1. **Verbal communication**

Verbal communication is a vital form of communication during assessment and interventions. During a verbal communication, body language and voice tone of a healthcare professional up the transfer of the information and clarity [8]. Promotion of clear explanations from subject and expressions of support from healthcare professional contribute to increased patient trust, understanding, and adherence to treatment strategies. Thus, the art of speaking is learned via the acquisition of information and consistency, which eliminates confusion, disorganized speech, a lack of expressiveness, and speech balance. Factors contributing for successful verbal communication are Concision (use of short phrases, including a single idea in a sentence), Clarity (choice of terms should be in agreement with the level of understanding of the receiver, avoiding linguistic "tics"), reliability (message to include real elements), attractiveness phrases and expressions that are pleasant to the listener to determine the attitude and action from him), elasticity (adaptability of message to communication partners, situation and context) [9].

2. **Non-verbal communication**

Apart from verbal communication, non-verbal communication refers to the behavioral elements of human-to-human messages. Consistency in written language, gestures, posture and expressions, have impact on physical, mental and emotional state of the patient, encompassing nearly 60 percent of the whole process [10]. In daily practice, non-verbal communications are rarely used and passed over to verbal communication. Communication from a doctor to patient should involve blend of spoken words, gestures, expressions, postures and eye contact [11]. Fundamentally, doctor-patient relationship is moderately dependent on the healthcare profession’s capacity to perceive the patient's nonverbal cues and on the physician's ability to transmit affect through nonverbal channels [12]. Body language of healthcare professionals enhance/reduce the patient’s exchange of their problems. Nonverbal cues;
body/limb movement, posture, facial expression, touch, tone of voice etc. can affect rapport, patient trust, the willingness of the patient to adhere to the plan of care and the patient's satisfaction with the doctor-patient relationship. Health care professional’s nonverbal aspects looked to be geared at displaying empathy, involvement, and interest in the patient as a unique individual. Body movement/posture helps to find out the interest of the healthcare professional in the patient. It helps to transfer health related information during communication actively and encourage better compliance. Certainly, inappropriate facial expression obstructs effective communication, as facial expression is one of the key components in the communication of mood, empathy, and understanding, all of which are feelings that doctors must communicate regularly [13]. Furthermore, healthcare professional’s nonverbal behavior such as touch or tone of voice might helps to improve well-being by diminishing anxiety as well as providing comfort zone [14]. Touch is an important part of communication in healthcare profession, especially when it comes to creating relationships with patients and attending to them as individuals, for the better outcome of the intervention [15]. Communication by touch happened in conjunction with considerable use of verbal and other non-verbal communication skills such as gestures, head nodding, and eye contact in healthcare professional practice. In addition, a mode of non-verbal communication, listening and understanding of patient problem on part of healthcare professional is crucial. The quality of listening varies considerably from person to person, ranging from good effective listening, which demands a high degree of involvement and attention from the listener, to merely passive listening or hearing, which requires only the consciousness of the listener [16]. A good listener is one who attends fully to other, using appropriate nonverbal signs.

3. Formal communication

Formal communication encounters documentation and optimization of the team work and effectiveness among healthcare providers, discussing issues/concerns/policies to patients and their families [17]. Formal communication plays a crucial role in a multidisciplinary team work, where groups of specialized health professional refer the same patients [18]. Formal communication improves the quality of effective treatment intervention and primary outcomes for the patients. Formal communication training is professional relevant, efficient, and showed focused on strengthening desirable communication skills [19]. They must focus on clinical and ethical judgments on their own, based on communication and relationships with their patients, other members of their health care team, and health care institutions.

4. Informal communication

Informal communication events have been identified and more valuable for a better grasping of a patient's baseline function in comparison to their present function, gaining a more holistic understanding of the patient's demands, and gaining a better understanding of a patient's desire and care goals. Informal pattern of communication allows patients and caregivers to connect and communicate more freely [20]. Further, it has been found that, informal communication is one of the commonly used method to convey and share information with patient and healthcare worker in relation to patient health problems [21]. Interaction between patient and doctors, mostly involve face-to-face communication is preferred choice for better understanding of problem and intervention. Patient should feel like “I find the person I want to speak to and talk to them directly.” However, in certain circumstances computer assisted, virtual or telephonic communication is needed, mostly in follow-up, although passing information back and forth
found to be effective with verbal and face to face method of communication. Bridging the line between the formal and informal communication is within the multidisciplinary team, which promotes timely and efficient flow of information for both clinical as well as administrative issues among team members [22]. It assists in serving and improving the quality of communication among team members which results in better patient care.

5. Technology aids and signs and symbols

Shortage of beds and longevity with numerous diseases or chronic illness in old age, expose healthcare team to face difficulty in giving best care for patients with chronic illness [23]. This lead to advent of technology assisted devices and signs and symbols for better management of health care system. Technological solutions of text messaging, gathering and monitoring data, diagnosis and treatment at home or for people living in remote areas, and retrieving electronic health records for follow up and education purpose have been brought into practiced [24]. Technology played a vital role in the rehabilitation during COVID-19 pandemic period. As there were chances and fear of viral infection prevailing around the globe, to increase pleasant moods, telehealth or technology-assisted intervention comprises interaction between patients and healthcare professional’s or peer-to-peer communication between patients and/or health professionals were widely promoted [25]. Telehealth primarily intended for use in the care of the elderly, chronically ill, and bedridden [26]. Despite the fact that telehealth is being widely used in national healthcare; efforts across countries have been fragmented to benefit from enhanced cross-border coordination towards humanity. The potential benefits of telehealth tools and services have been documented for the chronic illness population, and they have been widely adopted and implemented [27].

However, on the flipside, at times healthcare technology presents poor reputation [28]. Both healthcare professionals and patients express dissatisfaction with the decision to use technology-assisted devices in medical settings for varieties of reasons such as uploading patient data into software, warning alarms on minor changes in a patient's symptoms, and repeated reminders to the patient about treatment protocol and follow-up or investigation, to name a few. To avoid these hiccups, prior training for the use of the technological devices is need of the hour both for the health care team and patients who have adopted technological assisted device for better understanding. Further, awareness among the society for the cost-effective, economical and same type of treatment is available on the technology assisted mode is necessary to encourage the benefits.

Conclusion

Communication is a tool which enables patients to express, transfer information and understand and project treatment and future projections by a healthcare professionals. Different modes of communication are being used as per availability and existence. Further, positive non-verbal and informal communication has additional advantage in better compliance and effective treatment outcomes for the patient. As these modes of communication, represents attitude and emotions, helps to improve the psychological state of the patient, which is one of the crucial factor in enhancing the health status. Additionally, it strengthens the doctor-patient cooperation and relationship.

Conflict of interest

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References