

Verbal Communication used by Cardiologist at National Heart Centre Malaysia

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Abstract

Issues regarding the relationship between doctors and patients have been discussed generally. Literature concerning the health care was based on the performance and patients' view on the facility provided in the health care services. However, some issues identified on verbal communication used by the cardiologist in their daily career life. The objective of this paper is to focus on the verbal communication used by the cardiologists with their patients. This study uses qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach. A total of 15 cardiologists were interviewed. An in-depth interview and observation were used to study the verbal communication skills used by cardiologists in the National Heart Institute, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia. The researcher then transcribed the data verbatim and analysed it using ATLAS.ti7 software a allow coding the key themes, sub-themes, and interrelationships. The results of the study show that the verbal communication skills which are greeting and welcoming the patients; use the preferred language during the consultation session that will easily understand by the patients; give clear, supportive, and encouraging health care information in order to build good relationship with patients. Based on the results gained, it is recommended that doctor can be given training in improving and maintain verbal communication skills during the interactive session with their patients.

Keywords: verbal communication skill, Cardiologists, Patients, Health Care

Introduction

Healthcare system in Malaysia has an efficient in operating a dual health care system through government and private healthcare system. Every year numbers of medical students are graduated as health care professionals and medically they are able to serve their patients.

Verbal communication skills in health care between doctors and patients facilitating face-to-face consultations. The researcher perceived cardiologists' use verbal communication skill during interacting with patients is an essential part of the delivery of effective care. The information that delivered by the cardiologists should be able to understand and perceived by the patients via their verbal communication.

The main objective of this study is to look into the verbal communication skills used by the cardiologists with their patients at National Heart Institute, Malaysia. The subject of cardiologist's patient interaction and communication is raised as a concern mainly by the public. A verbal communication skill in health care is one of the main parts as it raises positive health outcome and patients' satisfaction.

Literature Review

Past research has shown that communication with a patient will help the doctors to know about the patient's health problem and creates a therapeutic relationship necessary for its management and, if possible, its solution (Martin, 2005). Effective doctor-patient communication can help patients achieve their healthcare goals and provide them with relevant health information for making important health care decisions. In addition, recent research provides compelling evidence that such communication improves clinical outcomes in the management of diabetes, hypertension, and cancer. researcher emphasize on doctor-patient communication increase doctors understanding of patients' individual needs, perspectives, and values; to give patients the information they need to participate in their care; and to build trust and understanding between physicians and patients (Levinson, 2010). In order to look at the verbal communication skills used by the cardiologists to their patients, the researcher identified The Relational Health Communication Competence Model (RHCCM) which reflecting the communication competence that influences health outcomes (Weathers, Query & Kreps, 2010). The model suggests that the level of communication competence exhibited by key participants in the delivery of care is directly related to their abilities to establish combined health care relationships, share relevant health information, make informed health care decisions, and coordinate activities to achieve desired health outcomes such as health education, provision of social support, and medical care communication influences. The RHCC model suggests that insufficient levels of relational communication competence will not enable the health care delivery wheel to move forward, and may, in fact, cause the wheel to roll backward, failing to fulfil health care goals and exacerbating health problems.

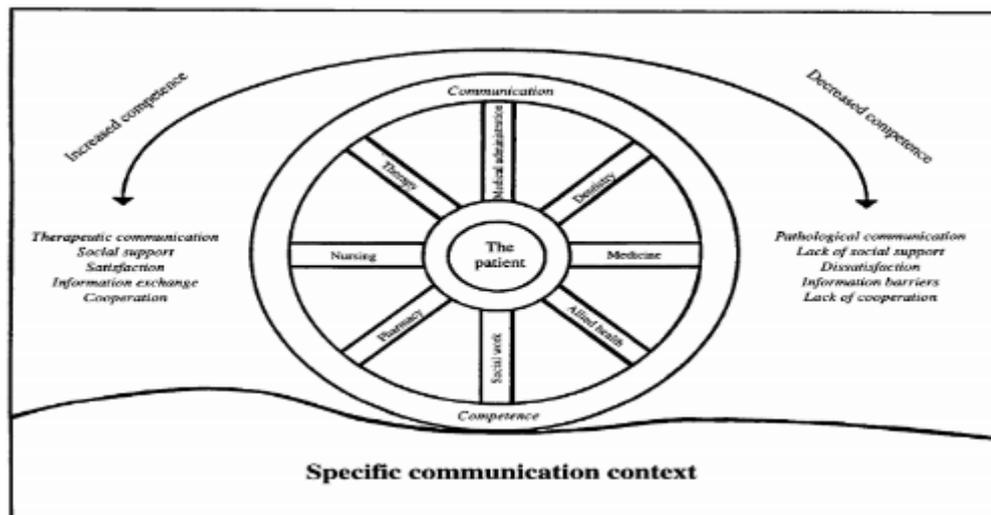


Figure 1: Relational Health Communication Competence Model (Gary Kreps, 1988)

Doctor-Patient Verbal Communication

A doctor's main job scope is communicating with their patients as well as an interconnected relationship with patients' illness, decision making on the treatment and therapy matter which is lead to the strategic way for a successful and effective health care system (Neo, 2011). Doctor -patient communication is an essential component in the health care system. A good doctor-patient communication is a significant role as heart and art of health care. Ajjawi & Higgs (2007) specified a doctor's interpersonal communication skills encompass the ability to gather information to provide patients with accurate diagnosis, advise them, give therapeutic instructions, provide needed support and establish caring consumer-provider relationships. Epstein (2007) focused on communication in healthcare settings and patient-physician relationships, and pointed on patient-centered communication has a positive impact on important outcomes, including patient satisfaction, adherence to recommended treatment, and self-management of chronic disease. A doctor's communication skills comprise of the ability to gather information in order to facilitate accurate diagnosis, counsel appropriately, gives therapeutic instructions, and establish caring relationships with patients (Bredart, 2005 & Duffy, 2004). As this is a process of the exchange of information, supporting patients' self-management, the management of uncertainty and emotions, decision making and enhancing the physician-patient relationship (Street, 2009).

Methodology

A qualitative research design is used in this study by focusing on the verbal communication skills used by the cardiologist's use and practice during communicating with their patients. A phenomenology approach was adopted in this study to describe phenomena or an individual's experience such as the cardiologists' description of living experience when communicating with patients in exploring participants' learning journeys. A total of 15 cardiologists have been interviewed in-depth as an informant of the study (Table 1). Apart from that, the researcher will also use trilingualism, such as observation, taking notes, audio tape recording. The informants were selected based on purposive sampling with criteria of it must be a medical doctor dealing with patients, several years of working experience dealing with patients and focus on the life experience of the cardiology doctors in dealing with their patients using interpersonal communication skills.

During the interview, the researcher was engaged with the informant by posing questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to the informants' responses, asking follow-up questions and probes based on those responses. In-depth interviews were usually conducted face-to-face which involves one interviewer and one informant. In addition, an observation method was also being used in this research for the purpose of description of settings, activities, people, and the meanings of what is observed from the perspective of the participants. The observation could lead to deeper understandings than interviews alone because it provides knowledge of the context in which events occur, and may enable the researcher to see things that the informants themselves are not aware of, or that they are unwilling to discuss (Patton, 1990). In order to identify the verbal communication skills of cardiologists during the medical consultation with the patient, the researcher observes to get the clear and accurate scenario on the cardiologists and patients communication.

Generally, the researcher looks into the occurrence of interpersonal communication skills of cardiologists towards the patients will be more focused on how the cardiologists get along with their patient to overcome the patient's illness and how they convey supportive health care information to the patients. This article is specifically on the verbal communication used by the cardiologist with their patients. The in-depth interviews took about 30 to 40 minutes. The interview was tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim after each session. The constant comparisons analysis was used to check the consistency of the interview transcribed data in identifying themes and categories. This constant comparison requires continual revision throughout the course of the study until saturation of the themes and categories have been achieved, leading to a new, or updated theory of how knowledge is acquired and skills are learned (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Results

The following discussion will be on the verbal communication skills used by the informant with the patients. Based on the thematic analysis, there are few verbal communication cues used by the cardiologist such as greeting and welcoming the patients, using multilingual will easily understand, clear health care information and supportive and encouraging talk and health care information build a good relationship with patients. Verbal communication is a cue has been used in speaking and talking. In health care, verbal communication plays an important role in delivering health care information. Health care professionals use verbal communication in order to talk with their patients in the way of giving health care information, advice on medication and treatment process on the diagnosis. In the process of answering the research objective, identifies several sub-themes were found during the data collection such as, Greet and welcome the patients, Multilingual that will easily understand, Clear health care information, Supportive and encouraging talk and health care information, positive and caring verbal communication of doctors builds a good relationship with patients. Below are the discussions on themes that engage in verbal communication used by the doctors.

Table 1

Summary of informants

No	Doctor's Name	Age	Race	Gender	Specialize	Working Experience (Years)
1.	Dr Kant	34	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	12

2.	Dr Guru	36	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	14
3.	Dr Bin	43	Chinese	Male	Cardiologist	21
4.	Dr Kumar	37	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	15
5.	Dr Ben	35	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	13
6.	Dr Mon	42	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	13
7.	Dr Tony	34	Chinese	Male	Cardiologist	12
8.	Dr Shah	33	Malay	Female	Cardiologist	11
9	Dr Len	38	Malay	Male	Cardiologist	16
10	Dr Min	39	Malay	Female	Cardiologist	17
11	Dr Farah	44	Malay	Female	Cardiologist	22
12	Dr Deva	34	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	12
13	Dr An	39	Chinese	Male	Cardiologist	17
14	Dr Hen	37	Chinese	Male	Cardiologist	15
15	Dr Alvin	38	Indian	Male	Cardiologist	16

Greet and Welcome the Patients.

In this study the patients experienced good service and poor service at one time or another. Excellent service makes patients want to come back and poor service makes patients wonder why they went there in the first place. Soo (2011) stated that verbal greetings which are used as markers of politeness and certain aspects of nonverbal terms such as making eye contact, smiling, nodding of heads, waving of hands when another person is in view are also reflected as friendly people. In Malaysia, culturally people welcome guest to home is an art to impress them. Greeting and welcoming can be a moment of truth in many occasions, as it is the first impression a patient on the doctor. Greetings are not just the words in use, but also the acknowledgment is given patients and guests upon seeing them.

Below are the quotes that shared by the cardiologists on how they greet and welcome their patients during the counselling session. From the interview with Dr. Kant, he shared his experience how he usually welcome and greet patients when the patients walk in to the clinic. Dr. Kant perceived every patient looking for a friendly greeting and a smile from the doctors at the first sight. Greet and welcome patients by the cardiologists are related to the behavioral ability. It is the early stage of the doctor's performance towards their patients before them further on consultation and decision-making about treatment.

Normally, whenever I see my patients walk into my room, I will greet them ...by saying... Hello uncle, hello aunty, or address them with Good Morning Mr. or Mrs... (Dr. Kant.)

Dr. Ben stated each of his days at work he receives patients from various race and religion. As a medical professional he usually welcome his patients by addressing them Mr. or Mrs. and followed by greet patients "Hello, hi or good morning". Dr. Ben believes by greet and welcome patients he can have a formal relation during the consultation. Literature stated by scholar Hei (2011) as the Malaysian society consists of various race and the interactions should be in certain rituals of patients. For example, when one member meets another member in public, one of the common rituals of greeting each other. A person can acknowledge the presence of the other verbally by saying 'Hello', 'Hi', 'Good morning, afternoon, evening', or use different extended community terms like 'Ni Hao', (Mandarin - How are you?), 'Assalamualaikum', (Arabic - Peace be with you), or 'Apa Khabar' (Malay - How are you) to display goodwill and to show high regard or respect for the other. Therefore researcher understands that the medical consultations which begin with greetings will create a comfortable environment for the patient to initiate discussion about the current medical concern.

Every day we receive parents' from multiracial groups. Basically, we greet them...that is addressed patients verbally by calling them "Mr. or Mrs." and also by saying "Hello, hi or good morning" some patients will be impressed when we call them "uncle" or "aunty". (Dr. Ben)

From the interview, Dr. Guru shared his experience that he welcome and greet his patient follow their culture and race. For him, each of his patients prefers to have a comfortable environment during their consultation session with their doctors such as being polite, friendly and kindness. Dr. Guru's perception is closely related to literature where scholar Yilmaz (2015), a greeting is the first impression of the physician on the patient. The Polite, warm and kind greeting is the onset of a good communication. So researcher perceived that welcoming patient during the consultation session perceived as the best practice to create a comfortable experience for those visiting the medical institution for the first time. Doctors who address their patients using positive welcoming can make all the difference in creating a comfort level for the patients. In the context relationship between doctors and patients, interpersonal communication skills established in emphasizing the value of patients consulting familiar doctors, who accompanied them on their illness journey.

Usually, our consulting session with patients begin by greet and welcome them. This is the form of verbal communication where we can know what language they prefer to either "Selamat Pagi doctor" or "Hello, good morning doctor". (Dr. Guru).

Apart from greeting introduction is another important element that used by the cardiology doctors during the interaction session between doctors and patients. Introducing doctors to a patient when meeting for the first time and personalize the introduction by saying something like, "Hello Mr... I'm Dr..., the cardiology surgeon ...". If family members or friends are in the room, acknowledge them as well. From the interview, the researcher identified few quotes that related to the theme on how the cardiologists introducing themselves to the patients. According to Dr. An, doctors introduce themselves using their names. For Dr. An emphasized the introduction is important to make the patients feel comfortable with them.

Dr. An also added as initial the doctors will respectively address the patients by calling Mr., Mrs., Madam or Sir. Dr. An's quote reflected as stated by scholars that an opening enclosed introducing, greeting, and welcoming the patient to sit down and invite them by "Hello Mr...", "Hello Uncle", "Good Morning Madam" and "take care, aunty". In addition, the patients will call by their names and special suffix which differ according to sex (Yilmaz, 2015). Based on researcher's understanding, for those patients who are already in distress and emotionally disturbed on their health issue, when they enter and some respect, love, greeting with a smile, and empathy can do wonders as also has been endorsed by a renowned image consultant.

Introduce myself to my patients, if they knew by addressing their name and have a casual talk with the patient is kind of basic verbal communication I do my job. This is because we want to make sure the patients feel comfortable with me. (Dr. An)

Based on Dr. Deva, he understands that the patients always expect their doctor to be nice to them in terms of a smile; friendly, pleasant, polite, humble, calm, focused, make the patient feel like a priority and make eye contact with them when they first meet. Scholars stated that a friendly and confidential relationship with the patient in the medical consultation is normally proceeding by greetings or polite to create a comfortable context for the patient to initiate discussion about the current medical concern (Byrne & Long, 1976; Ten Have, 1989; Robinson, 1998). The researcher understood the patients in this study view doctors as a caretaker on their health. Researcher understands the cardiology doctors have to create an environment that doctors as friends with introducing, greet and welcome their patients in the way of humble and polite.

When meeting the patients, I always welcome them with a warm smile. I will ask about his/her day. Ask questions with the intention of helping the patients' needs. (Dr. Deva)

Based on Dr. Tony, a friendly introduction can change and reflect the care and concern of the doctors during communicating with patients. Moreover, he really introduces himself to the patients so that patients know that he is newly appointed in IJN. Dr. Tony's statement supported by the literature as stated by the scholar about the specific elements of communication may include introducing and greeting the patient in a friendly way, addressing the patient by name, engaging in small talk, being friendly, and listening attentively (Desjarlais-deKlerk & Wallace, 2013). From the observation, the researcher understood that the doctors begin their interaction session with their patient from greeting, introducing, starting a relationship and closure of an encounter to the setting of a medical consultation.

I always make appoint on introducing myself first because I just joined IJN and it just 2 weeks. It is very important to introduce ourselves to the patients. It is also better for patients knowing doctors who newly appointed. (Dr. Tony)

Multi language that will easily understand

Verbal communication can be language that used by the doctors during interacting with their patients. Our country Malaysia with multiracial people live in and each ethnic has their own culture and languages. In order to the verbal communication used by the doctors to communicate with patients, the researcher identifies language is closely related to IPC skills of the doctors to their patients. The use of multi-language is highly implemented by the cardiology doctors in IJN. From the interview, researcher recognized the informants came out with similar themes using multilanguage in order to make their patients easily understand.

The respondents were highlighted on how they communicate verbally using multi-language. From the interview, Dr. Ben stated that doctors communicate with patients' not focusing on specific language but using multi-language as the patients from multiracial. Dr. Ben also pointed that doctors speak on patient's preferred language because of he aware that not all patients fluent in English. This is because the doctors make sure the communication between the doctors needs and make the patients understand their illness. From the interview, Dr. Ben stated that doctors communicate with patients' not focusing on specific language but using multi-language as the patients from multiracial. Dr. Ben also pointed that doctors speak on patient's preferred language because of he aware that not all patients fluent in English. Dr. Ben's statement is supported by the literature as in the multilingual context the ideals of shared decision-making within consultation are eroded. In this phenomenon, the doctor first presents his idea, tries to convince the patient of the benefits of another treatment process and goes on clear the patient's doubts (Swinglehurst, Roberts, Weber & Singy, 2014). The researcher here understood that patients also expect care, concern, courtesy in and a clear explanation using their own language. The researcher pointed a special consideration needs to be given to doctors using patient's preferred language.

We, doctors, interact effectively with their patients by speaking with their own local language. For instant in Malay, Chinese or in Tamil as some, the patients can't speak or understand English. (Dr. Ben.)

Dr. Mon does state that he receives multiracial patients. In this phenomenon, Dr. Mon pointed that doctors must skilful in making patients understand the healthcare information. Dr. Mon agreed that in IJN, doctors are capable of verbal communication in order to assist patients to understand the messages that conveyed in on their language. A literature review has supported Dr. Mon's point that the role of Multilanguage in building deeper connections was a strong theme. Speaking the Multilanguage was seen as establishing a deeper relationship with patients; facial expression and building relationship (Pfaff & Couper, 2009). Based on the observation, the researcher understood doctors' conversation is sometimes difficult to understand by their patients. It is because of the different language used to communicate with patients. Doctors can communicate with multi-language; will make the consultation take place accordingly with the disease, treatment plan, and medical procedures.

It is very common in our career life as we dealing with multiracial. The verbal communication between doctors and our patients, especially using language is very important during the consulting session to make the health care information is delivered clearly. (Dr. Mon.)

Verbal communication reflects as an important component and it includes information about the nature of multi-language. Dr. Farah practices communicate using multi-language with her patients. She mentioned IJN will arrange language translator in assist patients to convey health care information. Dr. Farah's says supported by scholar Lisa Sparks, (2010) that doctor's language skills allow them to speak in both English and the patient's native language, the family member does not typically experience with using specific medical jargon or detailing option and drug protocols. This statement supported family members will attend doctor visits with their parents and act as translators (McGorry, 1999).

It is not an issue for us if the patients can understand multi languages, and for those can understand we will arrange a translator to help them. But most of the time we will manage to reach the patients. (Dr. Farah).

In this context, researcher perceived that doctors are capable of speaking more than one language. Based on the observation, most of the patients will be coming with their family member on their appointment in IJN. In most of the phenomena, doctor and patients interaction session using different languages will be assisted by the clinical assistance. In this situation, the family members or patient's companions will be the translator for the patients.

Clear Health care Information.

Doctors are frequently requested to provide information about their patients. Doctor experience maintaining the relationship between the doctor-patient and revealing of clear health-related information to a patient's parent or spouse. Initially, the doctor communicates to the patient information on all relevant options, and their benefits and risks, so as to enable the patient to make an informed treatment decision. Based on the interview, the researcher found that some respondent has stated how they convey clear health care information on the patient's illness. Dr. Alvin stated that doctors always clearly explain their diagnosis and treatment recommendations. According to Dr. Alvin by providing clear health care information he makes the patients and their family brief on the illness of the patients. Dr. Alvin always aware that his patients to get motivated by the end of the consultation. This statement supported by Travaline (2005) that the physician without knowledge of the patient, this level of need will emerge by degrees as the discussion unfolds and as the physician attempts to synthesize and present information in a clear and understandable manner. In this situation, researcher understood the cardiology doctors and uses clear health care information to their heart patients as it helps for a better understand in order to get treatment for illness and the medication taking. The statements as below:

If patients request for clear information then I would clear them by steps by steps. And just make it very clear to my patients. I very rarely use negative statements such as 'No Chance, Absolutely not'. I aware the patients will feel unmotivated. For me, if I never make my patients dissatisfy, I will definitely fail to convince them. (Alvin)

Dr. Bin said verbal communication by the doctors with their patients. Verbal communication plays an important role in doctor's daily career life. By using clear statement doctors can make their patients understand their illness and health related issue. Doctors using verbal communication to deliver a clear statement as make the patients understand. Silverman (2010) Verbal communication in medical consultations is well recognized as being important to the delivery of medical care and is generally easy to interpret as it with clear points, it occurs in a single mode, it is mostly under voluntary control and communicates cognitive thoughts more than the emotions. Researcher understands verbal communication's role is a vital element in doctor's daily career activity. Verbal communication in clear points can be a positive health outcome in making the patients understands their illness.

In order to, the verbal communication used by the doctors to communicate with patients, using clear statements which can make the patients understand. (Dr. Bin.)

Dr. Min expressed his experience that the clear verbal communication between doctors and patients will lead to better understanding of the health care information delivered by the

doctors. In the health care system, doctors' verbal communication conveys the health care information together with the participation and the feeling of communication creates a positive relationship between doctors and patient. Literature has supported as Graham (2008) stated when conveying information verbally, physicians and staffs should communicate in a key point, avoiding excessive information; most patients will not remember more a message. The author pointed, it is important to speak slowly and avoid medical as similarly stated by the information saying on verbal communication. Obviously, in this research the researcher perceived, verbal communication involves of persuading, explaining, motivating, counseling or instructing as an interactive process between doctors and patients with the aim to deliver appropriate health care information will be delivered.

So through verbal communication, we doctors always try to make the conversation with the patients as simple as we can and make possible as they understand. (Dr. Min)

Supportive and Encouraging Talk and Health Care Information

This is an approach in interpersonal communication skills focusing on the verbal communication and the interpersonal relationships between the doctors and patients. A supportive approach is adopted to encourage the patient to hope and cope with their illness. Two from the respondents shared their experience in giving supportive and encouraging health care information. Dr. Shah said that supportive phrases through verbal communication will help make the patients have a better feeling of their health. Human communication and support in achieving good medical outcomes by providing support and encouragement during consultation between doctor and patients. Dr. Shah believed patients and families speak more openly and are more trusting when they feel their doctor's empathy and compassion. Dr. Shah's statements supported by literature as a caring connection can be enhanced by recognizing the stresses that illness imposes on a patient and family (Balaban, 2000). Scholar also emphasized that by encouraging and supporting the patient and their families to feel comfortable on the explanations in order to understand a medical problem. Effective and supportive communication can assist the patients and their family with right health care information. During making treatment plan decisions, patients are also encouraged to consider clinical trials as an option.

Verbal communication by the doctors will lead to a better understanding of the patients, especially when they need support and encouraged on their illness. (Dr. Shah)

Verbal communication in the consultation session is a main element between the doctors and patients. Dr. Tony explained that verbal communication as patient care and treatment and medication process. During the consulting hour's doctor's encouraging words, supportive to the patients and their family are good therapy for the illness. Scholars said that several styles that characterize patient-centered care are the use of supportive talk such as verbal validation of the patients' emotional or motivational state by doctors. The greater the supportive talk, the greater the positive perceptions of patients (Denio, 2013). The researcher perceived doctors are helping patients to recover from heart disease based on doctors' support and it really can help keep them to overcome their illness. The researcher found the respondents express their verbal communication skills in a comprehensive of daily health care responsibilities such as talking to the patient on their health condition, explaining treatment and medical procedures, discussing informed consent with patients; and breaking news to patients.

The communication of the patient's medication and treatment between doctors and patients is an effective process in health care and medical consultation. It's all about patient care, treatment, medicine, and healing. (Dr. Tony)

Verbal communication plays an important role in health care. Dr. Farah stated verbal communication as it leads to better understanding of their healthcare information on their illness. Truly, doctors always have to be more informative, accommodate, and supportive with patients who are forthcoming with questions, concerns, opinions, and preferences. Similarly, if a patient with a serious illness a doctor have to use accompanying and assist patients by providing opinion , concerns, and encouragement. The literature showed that some clinicians routinely provide more information; engage in partnership building; use supportive communication, including reassurance and encouragement; and are more willing than other clinicians to talk about psychosocial topics (Roter, 1997& Street, 1992). On the one hand, researcher perceived the same phenomena during the observations that patient perceived support and encouragement during the medical consultation and it's really helped the patients to feel emotionally connected and when supported by their doctors.

Verbal communication by the doctors will lead to a better understanding of the patients, especially when the patients really need support and encouragement on their illness. (Dr. Farah)

Recommendation

It is recommended incorporating communication barriers from multiple perspectives into clinical guidelines to inform best practices to ensure continuous quality improvement in patient care and outcomes. The researcher understands some of the steps can be taken in order to bridge barriers and gaps using interpersonal in communicating with their patients. A doctor well trained in active listening skill will concentrate on both verbal and non-verbal communication in conveying messages to patients. A doctor's communication strongly affected the quality of care on a patient's illness. In this article cardiologist's verbal communication can be improved by Effective communication in clinical practice and teaching. Based on Joseph (2012) stated one of the most important skills that physicians in academic and community practice should strive to acquire.

Formal training programs have been created to enhance and measure specific communication skills. Many of these efforts, however, focus on medical schools and early postgraduate years and, therefore, remain isolated in academic settings. Thus, the communication skills of the busy physician often remain poorly developed, and the need for established physicians to become better communicators continues. Healthcare information, both written and verbal, should also be appropriate across age groups and cultural backgrounds. Physicians should be aware that cultural perceptions of medical conditions and treatments, and the nuances of translation from a patient's native language, can also have a role in their level of health literacy.

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