RADIOLOGY COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING MODULE

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Introduction

- Good communication skills are important to foster a good doctor/patient or doctor/referring clinician relationship.

- There is a growing emphasis on teaching communication skills to medical students, residents and trainees.

- Simulation has been used to allow doctors practice their communication skills in a safe setting and get feedback on how to improve.
Essential Elements of Communication

1. Build the doctor-patient relationship
2. Open the discussion
3. Gather information
4. Understand the patient’s perspective
5. Share information
6. Reach agreement on problems and plans
7. Provide closure

First Things First

Make sure the FIRST thing you do when meeting a patient is introduce yourself

- Name
- Title
- Role in patient’s care

Example: “I am Dr. Carolynn DeBenedectis, I am a radiologist and I read your mammogram today.”

Build the Doctor-Patient Relationship

• Greet and show interest in the patient and their family.

• Use words that show care and concern throughout the interview.

• Use tone, pace, eye contact, and posture that show care and concern.

• Respond explicitly to patient and family statements about idea and feelings.

Open the Discussion

• Allow the patient and family to complete opening statement without interruption.

• Ask "is there anything else?" to elicit full set of concerns.

• Explain and/or negotiate an agenda for the visit.

Gather Information

• Address patient and family statements using open-ended questions.

• Clarify details as necessary with more specific or "yes/no" questions.

• Summarize and give the patient and family opportunity to correct and add information.

• Transition effectively to additional questions.

Understand the Patient’s Perspective

• Ask about life events, circumstances, other people that might affect health.

• Elicit patient's and family's beliefs, concerns, and expectations about illness and treatment.

Share Information

• Assess patient's/family's understanding of problems and desire for more information.

• Explain using words that patient/family can understand.

• Ask if the patient/family has any more questions.

Reach Agreement on Problems and Plans

- Include the patient / family in choices and decisions to the extent they desire.
- Check for mutual understanding of diagnostic and/or treatment plans.
- Ask about acceptability of diagnostic and / or treatment plans.
- Identify additional resources as appropriate.

Provide Closure

• Ask if the patient and family have questions, concerns or other issues.

• Summarize

• Clarify future time when progress will again be discussed.

• Provide appropriate contact information if interim questions arise.

• Acknowledge patient and family, and close interview.

Additional Elements of Communication

1. Demonstrate empathy
2. Communicate accurate information
3. Types of communication scenarios in radiology

Demonstrate Empathy

- Demeanor is appropriate to the nature of the conversations.
- Show compassion and concerns.
- Identify / label / validate patient's and family's emotional responses.
- Respond appropriately to patient's and family's emotional cues.

Communicate Accurate Information

• Accurately convey the relative seriousness of the patient's condition.

• Take other participating clinician's input into account.

• Clearly convey the expected disease course.

• Clearly present and explain options for future care.

• Give enough clear information to empower decision making.

Types of Communication Scenarios in Radiology

1. Error and apology
2. Breast Imaging Results / Bad news
3. Telephone Skills / Dealing with an angry clinician
4. Discussing findings with parents of a pediatric patient
5. Talking with patients about the need to change or cancel a procedure at the time of the procedure
6. Explaining the risk of radiation

Scenario Specific Communication Skills
Error and Apology

• Frankly disclose that an error was made.

• Accept responsibility for error.

• Sincerely apologize for the error.

• Do not be ambiguous, be clear and use layman’s terms.

Scenario Specific Communication Skills
Cancel / Change Procedure

• Clearly state the procedure needs to be canceled or changed in layman's terms.

• Clearly state the reason for the change/cancellation in layman's terms.

• Do not assign blame / put changes in a positive light.

References


4. Wu Aw, Huang IC, Stokes S, Pronovost PJ. Disclosing medical errors to patients: it is not what you say, it is what they hear. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2009;24(9):1012-1017

