

BARRIERS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE MEDICAL SYSTEM

Ana-Maria PREDILA
University of Craiova, Romania

Abstract: Good communication is a linchpin of effective health care, and if it's missing, your entire business is likely to suffer. Health communication is extremely important for both physicians and patients. Effective communication between doctor and their patients is crucial to improving healthcare outcomes and patients' satisfaction. Studies conducted during the past three decades show that the clinician's ability to explain, listen and empathize can have a profound effect on biological and functional health outcomes as well as patient satisfaction and experience of care.

Keywords: health, communication, strategy, barriers, medical, system

Introduction

Communication is undoubtedly the most fundamental aspect of any patient-doctor relationship. It forms the basis to trust, improved patient outcomes and increased patient safety. Communication is vital in the medical field, because health is the one that takes care to reduce everything, in the end.

Communication is a core element of healthcare activities with community health nurses.

All nursing activities such as assessment, planning, intervention, evaluation, health teaching, encouragement, counseling, and caring are never be achieved without effective communication. When considering the importance of communication in health care, patient safety is one of the top reasons to create an effective communication structure in any health care organization. Inadequate communication is often a leading cause of in-hospital deaths.

Attributing a breakdown in information exchange to simply a generic “communication error” without further specification is ineffective and a gross oversimplification of a complex phenomenon. Further dissection of the communication error using root cause analysis, a failure modes and effects analysis, or through an event reporting system is needed. Generalizing rather than categorizing is an oversimplification that clouds clear pattern recognition and thereby prevents focused interventions to improve process reliability. We propose that being more precise when describing communication error is a valid mechanism to learn from these errors.

Why is it important to know about barriers to health care?

A barrier to health care is anything that restricts the use of health services by making it more difficult for some individuals to access, use or benefit from care. Being aware of barriers to health care can help health professionals be more sensitive to the challenges faced by their patients. They can also take steps to reduce or overcome some of these barriers, help their patients to overcome others, and improve quality of care.

Identifying Communication Barriers in Health Care

One of the most common barriers encountered nurses in health communication is their limited training in using proper strategies in communication with patients and families such as listening, focusing or assertiveness. Also, many doctor provided intervention, counseling, health education and caring without using the principles and different types of therapeutic interaction and empathy.

- Patients need to be able to convey information about their health complaints to healthcare workers;
- Healthcare workers may make mistakes due to lack of comprehension of the patient's concerns;
- Other types of barriers represented in the patients and their families are: culture variations, level of education, health belief, and level of acceptance of the disease, nature of signs and symptoms, and language misunderstanding;
- The absence of teamwork and sense of cooperation may be a big difficulty to establish the nurse-patient communication.
- Inability to share information across departments: Healthcare staff across multiple departments often collaborate to improve the quality of care of the patient. Failure to coordinate these collaborative efforts could lead to miscommunication and duplicate work.
- Hurdles in upgrading to new communication systems: Many healthcare providers are stuck with outdated legacy tools due to their inability to change without experiencing downtime.
- Cost of hardware and infrastructure: While upgrading communication systems, the cost of infrastructure can be very high. In such cases, justifying the of new investments can be hard.

Health literacy barriers present themselves in various ways. Differences between the provider and the patient with regard to culture,

gender, sexual orientation, race, socioeconomic status, religion, age and/or language can all be potential barriers, as can the cultural competence of health professionals. Studies indicate that culturally diverse patients are more likely to experience multiple health disparities in access to care, communication with healthcare providers, and medical quality of care and outcomes.

„The design of all patient care services should be patient-centered, timely, efficient, evidence-based, safe, and coordinated. The Expanded Care Model delineates the above guidelines for healthcare teams to be prepared and take proactive steps in ensuring positive patient health outcomes. Consequently, patients would be informed about healthcare processes and empowered to become active participants in decisions regarding their health”. (AHRQ, 2015)

Problems with communication also occur among personnel within the same hospital. Intrahospital communication is any information sharing within a singular institution — whether it involves coordinating room changes, scheduling surgeries, assigning further tests, or even setting up appointments. Each health care system has multiple forms of communication that administrators and staff must be trained to use properly and efficiently. When even one of these communication methods fails, patient safety can be put at risk.

„Excellent HCP–patient healthcare communication further empowers patients to become active participants in their healthcare management; this is a key aspect of patient-centred care which has been linked to improved patient satisfaction and outcomes” (Bradley, S. and Mott, S., 2014, p. 23)

A review of the literature reveals consistent and significant differences in understanding and compliance when a communication challenge exists. This may be due to the fact that patients who had more difficulty understanding their physician are less likely to follow treatment

directions, and also because good communication can be a source of motivation, reassurance and support, as well as an opportunity to clarify expectations. Recent studies continue to identify communication as an important factor in the delivery of health care in three key areas: quality of care, access to care, and cost of care.

„It is equally important for the healthcare team to have the communication skills to provide health information that is easily understood by patients, families and caregivers. In this sense, health literacy is a shared function and responsibility: The patient must communicate effectively with the healthcare team, and the clinicians must be skilled in and committed to providing the education and support the patient needs to understand the illness and treatment decisions. It is relevant that the level of health literacy of a patient is the single most important indicator of health status. It directly impacts patient’s adherence to treatment regimens and health outcomes” (Abdellatif et. al, 2007, p. 1)

Patients need information that is easy to understand in order to make informed choices and take charge of their healthcare. The healthcare team should be aware of and respect a patient’s cultural and spiritual beliefs. There are several communication tools a provider and patient can use to help ensure that what is said is understood. The “teach-back method” is a research-based intervention with the goal of promoting the development of a shared treatment plan, quality and safety.

Non Verbal Communication. Non-verbal communication is a process of communication without using words or sounds. Non-verbal communication uses gestures, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, clothing, tone of voice, and other cues to convey a message. Like verbal communication, this method of communicating is rarely used alone. Non-verbal communication could be considered like a spice we use when communicating to add a little flavor. You might raise your eyebrows

emphatically when speaking to help make a point, or shake your finger at your child when you're angry. These are all non-verbal cues that help convey a message.

Benefits of Effective Communication in Healthcare

The benefits of improved communication will show in a number of ways. Some of them are (Spector, 2004):

- Improved diagnostic accuracy: patient and provider interviews will be more accurate, useful, and helpful.
- Higher patient satisfaction: by reducing the risk of human and system errors, you increase the chances of patients having a positive experience.
- Greater team satisfaction: effective team communication will enhance relationships, improve job satisfaction, and reduce job turnover

Conclusions

The purpose of any system is to provide services with optimal quality and quantity, and health care systems are no exception. One of the best ways to gain the patients' satisfaction, as major clients of health care systems, is through establishing effective and appropriate communication.

Consequently, doctor-patient communication ought to be considered carefully by both nurses and patients. Both must be understood that is shared experience and to reach healthy promoting behaviors and high quality of healthcare services, mutual understanding of must taken place among them. Communication is contextual, and improving physician-nurse communication about appropriate catheter use may require innovations that address the identified contextual barriers.

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