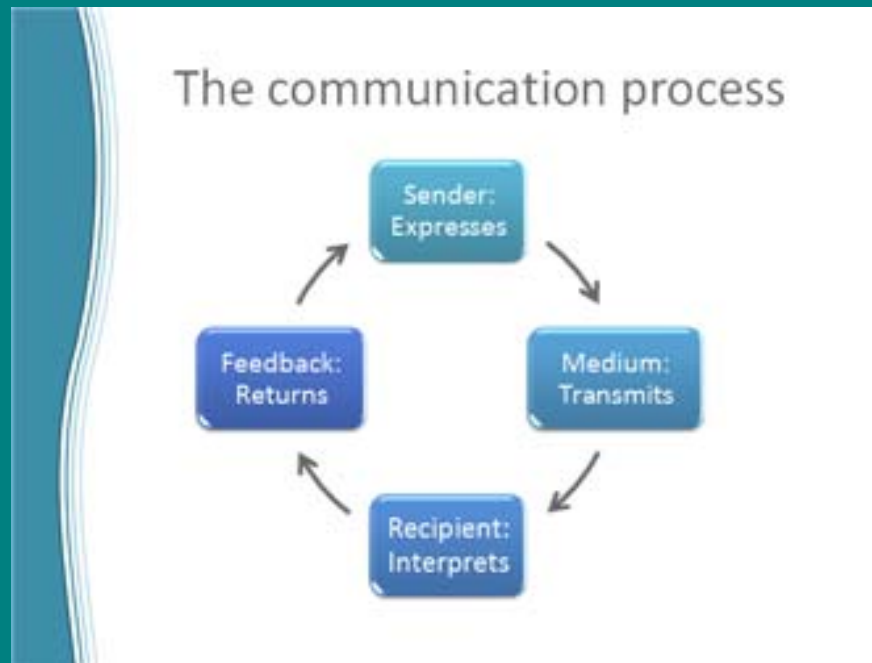


Communication Skills

Communication

- For a communication episode to be successful, both giver and the receiver need to have understood and interpreted the same information intended.



- Clinicians should communicate clearly and unambiguously.

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2tmbeQwlp1I>

Verbal and non-verbal

- 7% of the total communication is verbal
- 38% is tone
- 55% is body language

- Each should be congruent and used together to ensure effective communication

Difficult Discussions

- Breaking bad news
- Communicating prognoses
- Admission to a hospice
- Artificial nutrition/ hydration
- Medications – “myths of morphine”
- Do-not-resuscitate orders

Difficult Discussions

If we do it badly, the patients or family members may never forgive us; if we do it well, they will never forget us.” Buckman 1992

- Patients often have vivid memories of receiving bad news.
 - Negative experiences can have lasting effects on anxiety and depression.
 - Positive experiences can facilitate adaptation to illness and deepen the patient-clinician relationship
- You don't often need to tell people, they usually tell you if you let them !!

Communication Skills

It is important to convey to the patient and family that they are important and that you want to help them.

- Warmth
- Genuineness
- Empathy
- Acceptance
- Respect
- Dignity
- Trust
- Caring
- Beliefs and values
- Be non-judgemental

Communication Skills

- **LISTEN**..... hearing and attempting to understand what lies behind the words spoken!!!
- **Active listening**
 - Maintain eye contact
 - Allow the patient to talk
 - Nod to show understanding
 - Lean towards the speaker
 - Check for understanding by repeating information and asking questions for clarification

Communication Skills

Use open questions to find out what the patient is experiencing in their own way

- "How are you feeling?" vs. "I suppose you're feeling tired after your treatment."
- "What concerns you most about your illness?" vs. "Are you concerned your illness is getting worse?"
- "What has been most difficult about this illness for you?" vs. "You must be finding the illness difficult?"

Communication Skills cont.

- **Silence**

- Difficult, yet extremely important. Allow the patient to talk.
- Patients may fall silent when they have feelings too intense to express in words.
- If a silence needs to be broken say something like: "What were you thinking about just then?"
- Silence also allows the clinician time to think and assimilate what has been said.
- Sharing silence can be extremely powerful in communicating empathy and just giving others time

Barriers to effective communication

Clinicians

- Not knowing what to say
- Fear of dealing with strong emotions
- Not knowing enough
- Lack of time
- Lack of privacy
- Uncertainty
- Embarrassment
- Collusion
- Maintaining hope

Barriers to effective communication

Patient

- Language barriers
- Fear of getting upset/emotional
- Tiredness/illness
- Feeling like a burden/taking up time
- Consider staff too busy or not interested
- Anger
- Denial

Remember

Communication is a two way process

Only 7% of communication is verbal

Difficult Discussions require excellent communication skills with warmth, care, dignity, non-judgement

Listen

Ask open questions

SILENCE

Be aware of barriers

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nipj7PwCjTc>

Thank you