



In a Blink

Awareness, Assessment, and Adapting to Patient Communication Needs

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Ineffective communication is widely acknowledged as the number one root cause of patient safety issues (sentinel events) and a major driver of malpractice claims.

Effective communication, then, can help nurture a health care system that is ailing with medical mishaps and widespread litigation. A provider's effectiveness, however, is probably more variable than diagnostic or treatment options in terms of the things that can affect outcome and safety. If we can understand and develop awareness of the differences among ourselves, our co-workers, and our patients—differences in literacy, socioeconomics, ethnicity, gender, behavior, and the perception of time—we will be better able to find common ground and the mutual respect required for clear communication. The result will be safer health care, improved outcomes, and a profession whose integrity has been restored because of the patient-centered focus it brings.

The provider must ensure that each unique customer understands what they need to understand; therefore, the provider desperately needs effective communication skills and an understanding of the things that can reduce communication effectiveness.

Fortunately, communication is a learned skill, and the most important step in improvement is a willingness of the individual or organization to commit to developing better communication skills through training.

Lesson 1: Communicating Effectively in Diverse Ethnicity

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

- Describe the affect of ethnic diversity on provider-patient communication
- List four differences between “hot” climate and “cold” climate cultures
- Describe the impact of socioeconomic levels on patient communication
- List the 3As of effective patient-centered communication
- Define TREAT and defend its affect on the provider-patient relationship
- Define the four Cs and their benefits in patient assessment
- Select the most effective reactions to ethnic diversity given several scenarios

Lesson 2: Communicating Effectively Across Gender Barriers

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

- Describe the key differences in the way men and women communicate and their affects on provider-patient communication
- Provide examples of metamessages and resulting miscommunications
- Describe the impact of socioeconomic levels on provider communications
- List the 3As of effective patient-centered communication
- Identify indicators of communication issues due to gender in several typical scenarios
- List several actions to increase effectiveness across gender barriers

Lesson 3: Communicating Effectively at All Levels of Literacy

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

- Describe the ways literacy impacts the provider-patient communication and patient outcomes
- Describe the affect of socioeconomic levels on patient literacy and outcomes
- List the 3As of effective patient-centered communication
- Assess the level of patient literacy in several given scenarios
- Select the appropriate actions to assure effective communication at several levels of literacy

Lesson 4: Communicating Effectively through Time and Personality Conflicts

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

- Define the conflict of time and treatment as it relates to the provider-patient relationship
- Describe the perception of time for both “hot” and “cold” climate cultures
- Identify indicators of conflict avoidance in given scenarios
- List the 3As of effective patient-centered communication
- List six Principles of Civility and their impact on personality conflicts