



## Editorial

# Importance of Effective Medical Communication

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Communication is a learned skill. While most people are born with the physical ability to talk, not all can communicate well unless they make special efforts to develop and refine this skill further. Besides verbal communication there are 'non-verbal' and 'para-verbal' communications. Non-verbal component includes body language like posture, gesture, facial expression and spatial distance while para-verbal component includes tone, pitch, pacing and volume of the voice.

While communicating, most of us focus on the verbal component that constitutes only ten percent of the message delivered whereas non-verbal and para-verbal components contribute ninety percent of the total message delivered. There is also written communication that includes reports, letters, essays and articles.

Medical communication has received much attention over the past few decades. There is an increasing demand on doctors to be more effective communicators, especially when dealing with patients and their caregivers. It is well known that patients prefer clinicians who are warm and compassionate, listen to their patients and ask relevant questions.

Effective communication is a product of appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude. It has been proved that, doctors who communicate well are more likely to make an accurate diagnosis especially with regards to problems with psychological element or psychiatric conditions. They have their patients manage their medications better and have better outcomes and also encounter fewer malpractice claims.

The basic elements of a successful consultation include initiating the session, building relationship, arranging the consultation, gathering information, explanation and planning and closing the session. More advanced communication skills are required for

area like breaking bad news, dealing with anger, language and cultural variations, communicating through interpreter and dealing with medical problem like dementia. Another area of concern is dealing with attendants. They are often apprehensive and at times full of doubts and queries. They should be dealt professionally with appreciation and proper information.

We should be aware about communication with our colleagues also. One should never talk low about a colleague especially in front of patients and juniors. Courtesy and appreciation should be displayed to nurses, OT boys, cleaners as well. They are essential members of the team.

Formal training of the doctors in improving communication skills is necessary and has proven to improve overall outcome.

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