

Unit One - Terms and Tech

Effective Communication - Lecture Notes

Communication

- Communication is the exchange of information, ideas, feelings, and thoughts.
- Communication helps us know what the needs of others are and how to meet those needs.
- Healthcare workers must be able to communicate with patients, families, co-workers, other professionals, and supervisors.

Types of Communication

- **Verbal**
 - Words
 - Written
 - Spoken
- **Nonverbal**
 - Gestures
 - Facial expressions
 - Frowns
 - Smiles
 - Body posture/language
 - Touch
 - Listening

Elements that Influence Our Communication with Others

- Prejudices
 - Opinions or biases that affect how you feel about others and how you relate to them.
- Frustrations
 - Impatience, annoyance, anger, irritation.
- Attitudes
 - Disinterest, bored, bad moods.
- Life Experiences
 - Knowledge of your own behavior.

Barriers to Communication

- Labeling
 - Describing a person with a word that limits them (lazy, stupid, complainer, difficult)
- Sensory Impairment – Physical disabilities
 - Deafness, blindness, speech impairments
- Talking Too Fast
 - Especially important when working with elderly patients.

Effective Communication

- Health care workers must learn to put barriers aside and show respect to all individuals.
- We must learn to see beyond the surface to the human beings underneath.
- We must adjust our communication styles so that patients can understand.
- Developing skills in communication helps you become a better healthcare worker.
- It is important always to be courteous and understanding (polite and considerate towards others).
- Take time to evaluate gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice in order to understand what is really being said.
 - You must attempt to understand and to listen.

Elements of Communication

- **Message**
 - Information, ideas or thoughts.
 - What you are trying to convey to another person.
- **Sender**
 - Individual who creates a message to send.
- **Receiver**
 - Individual who receives the message from the sender.
- All three elements are essential. Without any one element, communication cannot occur.

Feedback

- Used to determine if the communication is successful.
- Occurs when the receiver responds to the message.
- Allows the sender to evaluate how the message was interpreted and to make any necessary adjustments or clarification.
- Can be verbal or nonverbal.

Listening

- Essential part of effective communication.
- Paying attention to and making an effort to hear what the other person is saying.
- Requires constant practice.
- Being a good listener makes you a better health care worker.
- Good listening skills:
 - Show interest and concern for what the speaker is saying.
 - Be alert and maintain eye contact with the speaker.
 - Avoid interrupting the speaker.
 - Pay attention to what the speaker is saying.
 - Avoid thinking about how you are going to respond.
 - Try to eliminate your own prejudices and see the other person's point of view.
 - Eliminate distractions by moving to a quiet area for the conversation.
 - Watch the speaker closely to observe actions that may contradict what the person is saying.
 - Reflect statements back to the speaker to let the speaker know that statements are being heard.
 - Ask for clarification if you do not understand part of a message.
 - Keep your temper under control and maintain a positive attitude.
- Good listening skills also help you follow directions, make good observations of patients, and understand your fellow workers.

Active Listening Skills

- **Reflect** on what the sender is trying to say – think about the message, not just your response.
- **Restate** (paraphrase) back to the sender to let them know they are being heard and understood.
- Ask for **clarification** if you do not understand part of the message.

Interviewing Techniques

- Many health care jobs involve obtaining verbal information (histories) from patients.
- Interviewing a patient involves obtaining information that will help you meet their needs.
- Many of the questions you must ask can be very sensitive and involve personal information.
 - Bowl & bladder functions.
 - Reproductive history and practices.
 - Substance use and abuse.
 - Previous diseases/disorders.
 - Family medical histories.
- Guidelines for a patient interview:
 - Be sensitive, polite and professional.
 - Be aware of patient confidentiality issues; it may not be appropriate to ask certain questions with friends or family in the room.
 - Maintain eye contact during the interview.
 - Use language the patient will understand – avoid using medical terms.
 - Speak clearly and distinctly.

Communication Styles

- Assertive Communication:
 - An honest and direct way to say what you feel or think.
 - You have the right to be heard and believed by others.
 - You must understand that it is OK for you and for others to say no when it is appropriate.
 - Does not take power or authority away from others.
 - Empowers you to speak up and be heard.
- Passive communication:
 - Allows others to control the conversation.
- Aggressive communication:
 - Takes power away from others and communication breaks down.
- Most people communicate in all three styles, depending on their feelings or thoughts at the time.
- Most effective style is Assertive.

Nonverbal Communication

- It is not necessary to speak in order to send a message.
- Health care workers need to be aware of both their own and patients' nonverbal behaviors because these are an important part of any communication process.
- When verbal and nonverbal messages agree, the receiver is more likely to understand the message being sent.
- Eye Contact
 - Lets others know that you are paying attention.
- Facial Expressions
 - Ex: smile, frown.
 - Make sure that the verbal message matches your facial expression.
- Gestures
 - Motions of a part of the body to express feelings or emotions.
 - Ex: shrugging your shoulders, turning your back, leaving the room while someone is talking – convey lack of interest.
- Touch
 - Can convey great caring and concern or rejection and anger.
 - Touch can convey more interest and caring than words could **ever do**.

Verbal Communication

- Spoken messages:
 - Tone of your voice, language you use, and the message you send are all interpreted by the receiver.
 - Always speak clearly and concisely.
- Written messages:
 - Spell correctly, use proper grammar, and write in a clear, concise manner.

Telephone Communication

- Answer the telephone cheerfully and promptly.
 - Use a pleasant, caring, and sincere tone of voice.
 - Speak clearly and courteously.
 - Identify yourself and give your title.
 - Identify your department or office.
 - Thank the caller for calling.
 - Allow the caller to hang up first to ensure that they have said everything they wanted.

Five Fundamentals of Service

- As you interact with patients and their families you can provide them with good customer service by following these service fundamentals:
 1. **Acknowledge**
 - Friendly greetings, eye contact, smile.
 2. **Introduce**
 - Introduce yourself and what role you have in the patient's care.
 3. **Duration**
 - Let patient and family know about anticipated wait times.
 4. **Explanation**
 - Explain what the patient or family can expect during the visit/procedure.
 5. **Thank You**
 - Thank the patient and family for visiting.

Communicating with Family, Friends and Visitors

- You are a representative of the organization that you work for.
- Speak and smile to visitors in the hallways.
- If someone looks lost, ask if you can help.
- Maintain an open, friendly and supportive attitude with patients and their visitors.
- Maintain patient confidentiality.

Recording and Reporting

- In health care, an important part of effective communication is reporting or recording all observations while providing care.
- Your ability to observe patient behavior and symptoms will directly affect their care.

Observation

- All of your senses are used to make observations.
 - Sense of sight: color of skin, swelling, presence of a rash or sore, color of urine or stool, amount of food eaten, and other similar factors.
 - Sense of smell: body odor, unusual odors of breath, wounds, urine, or stool.
 - Sense of touch: pulse, dryness or temperature of the skin, perspiration, swelling.
 - Sense of hearing: listen to respirations, abnormal body sounds, coughs, and speech.

Types of Observation

- Subjective Observation
 - Cannot be seen or felt. They are ideas, thought, or opinions.
 - Commonly called symptoms.
 - Usually statements or complaints made by the patient.
 - Report in the exact words used by the patient.
- Objective Observation
 - Can be measured, seen, felt, heard, or smelled.
 - Commonly called signs.

Reporting

- Observations should be reported promptly and accurately to an immediate supervisor.
- Reporting unusual events or any change in behavior or condition is every health care worker's responsibility.
- Relevant information should be reported in its order of occurrence.

Documentation

- A record of the patient's progress throughout treatment.
- Many people are responsible for documenting information on patients.
- Documentation must be accurate, concise, and complete.
 - Writing should be neat and legible.
 - Spelling and grammar should be correct.
- All records must contain certain information:
 - Patient name, address, age, identification #.
 - Diagnosis and physician's orders.
- Other information may be required:
 - Care or treatment given and how patient tolerated it.
 - Time of treatment.
 - Observations that would be helpful to other health care workers.
- All documentation must be signed with the name and title of the person recording the information.
- Errors should be crossed out neatly with a straight line, have "error" recorded by them, and show the initials of the person making the error.
- Patient documentation is a legal record, admissible in a court of law.

- If you do not write it down, it did not happen!
- Use ink for all documentation.
- Entries should be in short phrases. You do not need to write in complete sentences.
- Time should be recorded in military (24 hour) time.

Technical Writing

- Any writing designed to describe and inform about how something works.
- A really good technical writer (communicator) takes difficult scientific and technical language and transforms it into concepts that are easy to grasp and instructions that are easy to follow.
- You might be surprised to realize just how much of the information you encounter each day comes from a technical writer's keyboard:
 - ATM display messages
 - Application forms for a loan
 - Rules for playing games
 - Instructions for heating a frozen dinner
 - Policies in your company's employee handbook
 - Safety notices and warnings of all kinds

Technical Writing and Health Care

- Medical writers work in diverse settings and have a wide range of responsibilities:
 - Regulatory documents
 - Clinical study protocols
 - Drug brochures
 - Research papers
 - Health care magazines
 - Medical newspapers, newsletters and articles
 - Medical web sites
 - Patient education materials
 - Marketing and advertising materials

Tips for Good Technical Writing

- Select appropriate format for the document.
- Organize material logically.
- Prepare user-friendly instructions.
- Use graphics to enhance technical information.
- Zero in on your reader's needs.
- Revise the work based on feedback to ensure the correct message is being received.

Written Communication

- All written communications should be evaluated to make sure that the correct message is being sent.
 - Is the appropriate response to the message being given by the receiver?
- Always ask for feedback to continually improve written communication.

Summary

- Good communication skills allow health care workers to develop good interpersonal relationships.
- Patients feel accepted, they feel that others have an interest and concern in them, they feel free to express ideas and fears, and they develop confidence in the health care workers.
- Part of providing quality health care.