Therapeutic Communications

Topics
- The Basic Elements of Communication
- Communication Techniques
- Patients with Special Needs

Communication Components
- Communication is the exchange of common symbols:
  - Written
  - Spoken
  - Signing or body language
Basic Elements of Communication

Communication consists of a sender, a message, a receiver, and feedback.

Failure to Communicate (1 of 2)

- Prejudice:
  - Or lack of empathy
- Lack of privacy:
  - Inhibits the patient’s responses
Failure to Communicate (2 of 2)

- External distractions:
  - Traffic, crowds, loud music, EMS radios, TVs
- Internal distractions:
  - Thinking about things other than the situation

Patience and flexibility are hallmarks of a good communicator.

Trust and Rapport (1 of 2)

- Use the patient’s name.
- Address the patient properly.
- Modulate your voice.
- Be professional but compassionate.
Trust and Rapport (2 of 2)
- Explain what you are doing and why.
- Keep a kind, calm expression.
- Use an appropriate style of communication.

Professional Behaviors (1 of 2)
- First impressions are crucial.
- Be neat and clean.
- Practice good hygiene.
- Stay physically fit.

Professional Behaviors (2 of 2)
- Maintain an overall demeanor that is calm, capable, and trustworthy.
- Be confident, not arrogant.
- Be considerate; wipe your feet, etc.
Communication Techniques

Getting down to a patient's level can help improve communications on a pediatric call.

An open stance.

A closed stance.
### Eye Contact

- Use eye contact as much as possible.
- Remember to remove sunglasses while working with patients.

Use an appropriate compassionate touch to show your concern and support.
Questioning Techniques (1 of 2)

- Use open-ended questions.
- Use direct questions.
- Do not use leading questions.

Questioning Techniques (2 of 2)

- Ask one question at a time, and listen to the complete response before asking the next.
- Use language the patient can understand.
- Do not allow interruptions.

Observing the Patient

- Overall appearance
  - Clothing
  - Jewelry
- Mental status
- Speech
- Mood and energy level
Effective Listening and Feedback

- Silence
- Reflection
- Facilitation
- Empathy
- Clarification
- Confrontation
- Interpretation
- Explanation
- Summarization

Interviewing Errors

- Providing false assurances
- Giving advice
- Authority
- Using avoidance behavior
- Distancing
- Professional jargon
- Talking too much
- Interrupting
- Using “why” questions

Patients with Special Needs
Sources of Difficult Interviews

- Patient’s physical condition.
- Patient’s fear of talking.
- Patient’s intention to deceive.

Always treat elderly patients with the respect that they deserve.
Sensory Impairment

- Blindness:
  - Tell them everything you are going to do.
  - Use touch as a form of contact for reassurance.

- Hearing impairment:
  - Ask the patient what their preferred method of communication is.

Language and Cultural Considerations

- Understand that cultures vary and ethnocentrism hinders communication.
- There is additional fear when a patient cannot understand your language.
- Avoid cultural imposition.

Interpreters (1 of 2)

- If a child interprets, use an age-appropriate level.
- The emergency may cause distressing emotions, especially if the interpreter is a child.
- Speak slowly.
- Phrase questions carefully and clearly.
Interpreters (2 of 2)

- Address both the patient and the interpreter.
- Ask one question at a time, and wait for the complete response.
- The information you receive may not be reliable.
- Have patience.

Hostile or Uncooperative Patients (1 of 2)

- Set limits and boundaries.
- Document unusual situations.
- Consider having a same-sex witness ride in the ambulance.
- If your safety is in jeopardy, keep away from the patient.

Hostile or Uncooperative Patients (2 of 2)

- Have an appropriate show of force if necessary.
- Know local policy regarding restraints and psychological medications.
- Use law enforcement if needed.
Transferring Patient Care

- Before patient care is transferred to you, listen to the report carefully.
- Interact with colleagues with respect and dignity.
- Give a report to the receiving nurse or doctor.
- Introduce the patient by name, and say good-bye.

Summary

- The basic elements of communication
- Communication techniques
- Patients with special needs