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EXPLORING THE CRITICAL COMPONENTS IN DOCTOR-PATIENT COMMUNICATION, QUALITATIVE STUDY

ABSTRACT

Background: Effective communication with patients and their relatives is one of the most crucial skills a doctor can possess. Unfortunately, majority of students lack this important skill in the medical field. As a result, they require the proper training in order to enhance their communication skills.

Aim: This study's purpose is to explore the critical components of communication in the doctor-patient relationship.

Method: To obtain the data, focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) were performed. In total, 32 participants from the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS), UPM, and Teaching Hospital Universiti Putra Malaysia participated in the FGDs. In total, 11 participants from government or private hospitals and clinics participated in IDIs. Fifteen doctors and 17 medical students enrolled in the FGDs, whereas 5 patients and 6 relatives took in the IDIs. A protocol guide that focused on doctor-patient communication perceptions and experiences was developed. Utilizing the Atlas.ti programme, thematic analysis was employed to generate the data in order to construct the themes, a few layers of categories, and codes.

Results: Seven themes were identified: professionalism, content of communication, verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal communication skills, environment and visual communication. Commonalities and differences were identified from the findings. Medical students and doctors emphasized on the eye contact, management and treatment plans, and patient's privacy and confidentiality. Meanwhile, patients and relatives highlighted on empathy skill, advice and counselling, prognosis and use additional sources while deliver the information. All the groups also concurred that soft tones, layman terms, and preferred language are effective ways to boost patient compliance.

Conclusion: The findings concluded that the most effective way to train doctors and students to establish good communication for better healthcare services would be to comprehend the important components of communication. Because our participants were not aware of their rights in this regard, we also need to consider the patients' awareness of their privacy and confidentiality. In addition, we should pay attention to patient concerns and focus on our cultural standards when attempting to address our patients and their relatives.