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Role of Effective Communication in Health and Disease Management

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Abstract: In any kind of health care organization, effective communication plays a pivotal role for the health care providers as well as for the patients and as a result of effective communication; patients receive the optimum standard of preventive as well as curative care. Effective communication provided by health care professionals can enhance the active participation of patients and their family members as co-team members in facilitating the quality care services which improves their self-management as well as response towards treatment. The importance of effective communication can be revealed when the situation of communication gaps arises it results in overall lack of the highest health care efficiency and it may surge the patient safety risk also. Although the role of effective communication extends beyond the health care facilities when patients are not directly under the care of health care experts, the health care team can fulfill the gap with positive approach for better patient outcome.

Keywords: Effective communication, disease prevention, treatment adherence, telecommunication.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Effective health communication is a term widespread used by health professionals in various health care organizations. There are various modalities of health communication; through various health education innovative practices utilized as a tool for changing attitude and behavior of the people for improving health status of individual as well as of community. There has been a great transition towards health care from prevention of the various diseases to promotion of healthy lifestyle where effective health communication plays a tremendous role.

Review:

Communication within health and social care settings is considered effective when the receiver can be either the patient, family member, or the health and social worker, understands clearly the message being conveyed by the sender. For this to be happened the message must be clear, consistent and transparent. Communication among healthcare workers has a direct influence on the quality of their compassionate relationships, job satisfaction, and overall patient outcomes. This plays a great role for the provision of integrated health care. Effective communication serves as a medium between health care providers, policymakers, and the community ensuring that essential health information is conveyed accurately and comprehensively.

With regard to communication between patient and health care system, communication must be in a bidirectional pattern.

1. Patient must be comfortable enough to share their health issues to health care providers.
2. Health care providers must be adequately comprehend the information concerned regarding health issues for treatment aspects.
3. For prevention of recurrence, health care providers ensure that patients receive adequate information for maintaining health ^[2].

• **Stages of Health communication planning**

Health communication is planned by the health care providers and health educators based on the need of the people. If either the patient or health care provider lacks clear understanding of the information conveyed, the essential health care is compromised. Therefore, proper planning, its execution and evaluation is needed for effective communication. The various stages of health communication planning are as follows ^[1]:

1. Identifying the health problems and health needs
2. Understanding the communication resources and requirements in tune with the health projects
3. Identification of the priorities
4. Setting communication goals.
5. Assessment of communication resources.
6. Mobilization of communication resources.
7. Planning communication activities
8. Implementation of communication plans.
9. Monitoring and evaluation of communication programmes
10. Reassessment of communication programme

Social competences, especially good communication skills have continuously increasing their importance in higher education of health care ^[10]. Many researchers show the importance of communication skills for health professionals to speak fluently, using patient friendly terminology and able to carefully listen to the patients ^[11].

Achievement of communication skills are a top priority for health and social care workers. For this reason they are required some specific training on the subject. For these reasons, to ensure efficient communication, health and social care workers must understand the difficulties that patients face in adapting to their new environment and support them to alleviate the stress and anxiety related to health issues.

• **Relevance of Health Communication**

Communication is referred as a mode of expression of exchange of information. Therefore, in transmission of information, consideration regarding channels through which messages are given, to whom the message is addressed, what is the response of the public and impact of the information? One of the best way of transmitting health information through health education campaigns which can improve the economic or environmental conditions; prevents the emergence of risk factors in the community and also can bring about the behavior change of community. Communication can also help develop a positive attitude towards treatment approach, which might make it easier for patients to adhere towards treatment. The transitional care from hospital settings to home consists of a final review of the personalized discharge plan, including home care needs, transportation, patient safety information, follow-up and home care instructions, signs and symptoms to be monitored at home.

Intervention efforts to change behaviors of the community members are done with different modes of communication. It is reasonable to think carefully about the channels through which intervention messages are disseminated, to whom the message is attributed, how audience members respond and the features of messages that have the greatest impact. These considerations reflect the essential components of the communication process: channel, source, receiver and message, respectively ^[8]. As an advancement of technology, building up a strong communication is important for health care providers to meet the patient satisfaction level. Communication skill plays a crucial role for health care management. It will encourage the patients as well as family members for disclosure of the relevant information which greatly enhances the quality of care in patient management. Research studies have shown that the clinician's ability to explain, listen, and empathize can have a profound effect on patients' overall health outcome as well as increase their level of satisfaction for receiving care. Effective communication helps to create bond between the health care providers and patients which enhances the patient treatment adherence and outcome which can help patients for better decision making and self-management.

Patients are in a situation where they have to share their details required for the treatment to their physician so in this condition, physician must be empathetic, enough competent and genuinely interested for well-being of the patients.

Components of effective communication include maintaining eye contact, demonstrating affirmative gestures, speaking slowly and avoiding distraction ^[9].

The attainment of goal of health for all is based on adequate health infrastructure facilities and equitable distribution of health services and therefore health communication plays a key role for the increase of knowledge, attitude and practice towards optimum health care services ^[3]. The healthcare infrastructure is always with wide diversity of healthcare professionals' teams and multiple clinical records have to be collected as well as maintained from both in-patients as well as out patients. Effective communication is also crucial in ensuring that healthcare organizations run smoothly. When healthcare providers are able to communicate effectively with each other helps to ensure that all members involved in healthcare delivery are working together for a common goal, which is to provide optimum care to patients. Physician-patient communication help the patients for decision making, improving the management of patient doubts and make feel free patients to ask about the queries. Effective communication among healthcare providers can also help to reduce medical errors. Medical errors can occur when healthcare providers do not communicate effectively with each other. By improving communication among healthcare providers, healthcare organizations can reduce the risk of medical errors and improve patient safety.

In today's modern era, there are several ways of communication in health care that can help providers to more effectively communicate the patients, their family members as well as community. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)—played a major role in improving the access, the efficiency, the quality of healthcare services. Healthcare sector has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, driven by advances in digital communication technology. This will help to communicate in an effective way with patients, share health related information, and liaison with colleagues. It has improved the efficiency and effectiveness of health care services.

Health communication should be encouraged on the basis of new technologies. Media plays a crucial role for behavior change of individual as well as community. Mobile telecommunication tools are widely integrated into health care delivery as an effective mode of communication. It improves easy accessibility of medical intervention for upbringing health management ^[4]. Modern websites should be developed by the health care facilities so that young generation can easily get benefit out of it ^[5].

Mass media become the major source of information during pandemic situation. People feel also unsafe with many misinterpretations. It also creates fear, stress and psychosis among people [6]. Communication in health will emphasize for prevention and control of disease with special relevance in professional relation between physicians and patients, search for health information, developing key messages and campaigns of public health, guiding the consumers for the usage of health care services etc ^[7].

Social media acts as a powerful modality for health care service providers for providing health education but patient privacy and ethical guidelines must be followed when it is opted as a purpose for health communication. Effective communication plays a tremendous role for people to prevent the disease as well as stay out of the misconceptions regarding various health condition.

As an advancement of technology, health care professional can pursue innovative approach for communication which improves the treatment adherence of the patients as a result of it reduced number of the visit to the health care facilities, cost benefits as well as treatment outcome. Using email is also one of the ways of effective communication. Responding patient email or medication requests can be reviewed and addressed via emails which is time saving than phone calls. Patient Portal plays an eminent role for online access to health information, appointment and follow up visits, test reports, health education for life style modification and self-care management. In today's digital era, the healthcare sector is transformed with the adoption of electronic health records (EHRs) for patient care. EHRs will be a useful medium for maintaining patient care records. With EHRs, however, healthcare professionals can easily share relevant information electronically with their colleagues and patients as well. This promotes efficient coordination among different health care experts involved in a patient's care which improves the treatment adherence and ensures patient satisfaction level too.

Health communication is updated over a period time to improve the attitude of the people towards health in a positive manner. But in some cases, communication gaps and other communication issues can lead to insufficient health care efficiency. It is possible to expect discrepancies between messages disseminated and received. They arise not only due to differential exposure to the intervention but also because of the differences in interpretation in understanding information ^[8]. By creating a better understanding of the role of healthcare providers and to be understood that why communication matters in this situation communication gap can be fulfilled.

CONCLUSION

Effective communication in health care sectors facilitates better outcome through proper decision making. This will ensure clear policies which benefits comprehensive understanding of various health care related issues. Effective communication lead to effective team formation by ensuring quality of health care. It will provide timely delivery of health care services along with channelizing health resources like human resources, equipments and finance. In case of emergency situation health care administrators can play a crucial role for communicating to the health care staff, patients and their relatives and government officials. Optimum use of electronic medical records, social media, telecommunication etc. will help to receive health care service delivery through timely health education, medical advice and follow-up.

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