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Improving Patient Communication through the Training of Healthcare Professionals at Safa Hospital Bidar

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Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to explore healthcare professionals' perceptions and experiences of a communication skills training program implemented at Safa Hospital in India. Twenty-five healthcare professionals who had taken part in the communication skills training program physicians, nurses and allied health staff were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. To extract important themes from the interview data, thematic analysis was employed. According to the participants, the training programme improved their confidence, empathy and capacity for active listening, which in turn improved their interactions with patients. Particularly appreciated was the training's experiential, participatory format. But the participants also pointed out areas that needed work, such asking for further support to help them maintain the skills they had developed over time and wanting greater direction when handling difficult patient contacts. Healthcare personnel expressed satisfaction with the communication skills training programme, which seemed to enhance patient-centered communication. However, further assistance could be required to maintain these abilities. According to the findings, these training courses could be more widely applicable in healthcare environments and cultural contexts, but they would need to be carefully modified to fit in with regional requirements.

Keywords: Healthcare; Training; Communication; Safa; Hospital

Introduction

Good communication between medical professionals and patients is essential to providing patients with high-quality care. Nonetheless, research indicates that communication breakdowns between patients and providers occur often, which result in negative patient outcomes, higher liability concerns for healthcare organizations and dissatisfied patients [1,2]. Patient surveys at Safa Hospital in Bidar have indicated that there is a great deal of space for development in the medical staff's communication skills, which makes the problem more urgent there [3]. Patients have complained about being hurried through appointments, not having all of their concerns addressed and leaving with unanswered questions and an unclear care plan.

In response to this difficulty, Safa Hospital has recently instituted an extensive training programme designed to improve the healthcare personnel' capacity for patient communication. The hospital is providing its physicians, nurses and support staff with the skills and methods necessary to have more fruitful, compassionate and patient-centered conversations by means of interactive workshops, role-playing activities and continuous coaching [4,5]. A variety of effective communication techniques are covered in the training, such as using empathy, active listening, breaking down complex medical information into understandable terms and involving patients as active participants in their care.

The main components of Safa Hospital's communication training programme would be examined in this paper, along with participant perspectives and an analysis of the program's early effects on clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction. The purpose of showcasing this creative strategy is to offer a road map that other healthcare institutions can use to enhance the patient experience by developing the interpersonal skills of their personnel. Building effective provider communication skills would be crucial to providing the greatest treatment and getting the best results for patients as healthcare systems continue to negotiate the complexity of modern medicine [6,7].

The advantages of communication skills training for healthcare personnel have been emphasised by numerous research. Healthcare workers who receive communication skills training can see improvements in patient satisfaction, treatment adherence and clinical outcomes, according to a systematic study by Berkhof et al. [8]. In a similar vein, Dwamena et al. found through meta-analysis that educating physicians in communication skills enhance patient satisfaction and patient-centered communication [9].

A study by Patil et al. investigated the effect of communication skills training on the communication competence of healthcare personnel in the particular setting of the Safa Hospital Bidar. According to the study, the training course enhanced the healthcare workers' capacity to pay attention to patients, understand their worries and give them concise answers.

Additionally, studies have demonstrated the positive effects of good communication on patient outcomes, including increased medication

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compliance, decreased stress and anxiety and better chronic disease management.

Literature Review

Study design and setting

In order to investigate the opinions of healthcare professionals at Safa Hospital regarding the communication training programme, this study used a qualitative design and semi-structured interviews. The qualitative method was selected to enable a thorough comprehension of the experiences and viewpoints of the participants. The primary hospital campus in Bidar, India served as the interview location, which gave the medical professionals a comfortable environment in which to discuss their perspectives.

Subjects

The research employed a purposive sample technique to enlist study participants. With the use of this non-probability sampling method, the researcher was able to specifically choose participants who satisfied the inclusion requirements. The study's inclusion criteria made sure that only medical professionals who were working at Safa Hospital at the time and had just finished its communication skills training programme were included. The researcher was able to collect viewpoints from the specific population of interest by using this targeted sampling technique. Twenty-one of the twenty-five medical professionals who were invited to take part did so, resulting in 84 percent participation percentage.

Instruments

A review of the body of research on patient-provider communication training served as the foundation for the creation of an open-ended interview guide. The participant's experiences with the training programme, their perceptions of changes in communication behaviours and their input on the program's advantages and disadvantages were only a few of the themes covered in the handbook. The interviews were flexible due to the semi-structured method, which allowed the participants to offer their distinct perspectives and expound on their answers. Researcher conducted 10 to 15-minute interviews in order to reduce the amount of time that the healthcare practitioners had to devote to these visits. When the study team concluded that thematic saturation had been reached, meaning no fresh insights were emerging from the interviews, data collecting was stopped.

Interview questions

- What were your main takeaways from the communication skills training program?
- How have you applied the techniques and strategies you learned in your daily interactions with patients?
- What aspects of the training program did you find most valuable or impactful?
- What were some of the challenges you faced in trying to implement the new communication skills?
- How have your patients responded to the changes in your communication style?
- What recommendations would you have for improving the training program in the future?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with the communication skills training?

Data analysis

Every interview was captured on audio and was verbatim transcribed. After that, a thematic analysis method was used to the transcripts. After separately analysing the transcripts, two research team members recognised recurring themes and classified the information appropriately. The investigators convened on a regular basis to deliberate over their studies, settle any disagreements and enhance the theme framework. To highlight the main ideas, representative quotes were taken and extracted.

Overview

21 medical staff members from Safa Hospital who had finished the programme in communication skills training within the previous six months were included in the study. Ten doctors (48 percent) and eight nurses (38 percent) and three allied health workers (14 percent) made up the sample. The average age of the participants was 35 years old (range 28-52 years), with females making up the majority (n=13, 62 percent).

Perceived changes in communication behaviors

The majority of participants (n=20, 95 percent) stated that their contacts with patients improved as a result of the communication training programme. During consultations, they talked about feeling more self-assured, sympathetic and capable of attentively listening. One doctor said, for instance, "I'm now more attuned to the patient's emotional state and try to validate their concerns before moving on to problem-solving." Additionally, nurses saw gains in their capacity to assess for patient knowledge and provide treatment recommendations in more straightforward words. A number of participants (n=15, 71 percent) said they were better at getting the viewpoints of patients and attending to their issues.

Feedback on program strengths

The training's interactive elements, which included role-playing games and peer and facilitator feedback, were warmly welcomed by the participants. They discovered that these hands-on learning exercises were more beneficial than just listening to lectures. According to a nurse, "The chance to practise new skills and get constructive criticism was hugely beneficial it helped me break some of my old habits." A large number of participants (n=18, 86 percent) valued the chance to learn from a variety of healthcare disciplines as well as the training's relevance to their day-to-day work.

Areas for improvement

Despite their overall positive impression of the programme, a few participants recommended improvements. A small percentage of healthcare professionals (n=5, 24 percent) said the training did not offer sufficient direction on handling tough patient interactions, like breaking bad news or handling problematic patient behaviours. Furthermore, a number of participants (n=8, 38 percent) asked for additional continuous support, including coaching or refresher seminars, to help handle new difficulties and help strengthen communication skills over time.

Discussion

The results of this qualitative study indicate that healthcare workers responded favourably to the communication skills training programme offered at Safa Hospital and that it improved their interactions with patients. Increased self-assurance, empathy, and active listening skills were noted by participants. These are all critical components of patient-centered communication. The interactive and experiencing aspect of the training was highly appreciated, corroborating the notion that experiential learning opportunities are crucial for the development of interpersonal skills.

Even while the comments were mostly quite good, several participants did point out certain things that needed work. Managing tough patient contacts, such imparting bad news or handling problematic behaviours, required further assistance, which was a noteworthy worry. This is consistent with research showing that, in order to improve their communication effectiveness, therapists should get conflict resolution and emotional intelligence training. In order to assist reinforce the skills they had learnt over time, a number of participants also asked for further continuing support, such as coaching or refresher seminars. It has been demonstrated that consistent instruction and feedback results in greater long-lasting modifications to communication behaviours.

The very small sample size and single-site design of the study are among its drawbacks, which may limit how broadly the results may be applied. Furthermore, the information was gathered by self-report, which raises the possibility of social desirability bias. In the future, studies should think about including objective metrics for patient outcomes and communication abilities in order to assess the effects of these training programmes more thoroughly.

The inclusion of medical professionals from various specialties, such as doctors, nurses and allied health workers, was a significant strength of this study. This interdisciplinary approach is in line with suggestions for training in communication to promote teamwork and mutual understanding among the members of the care team. The training programme may have had a more comprehensive effect on patient-centered communication within the organisation by involving a diverse range of healthcare providers.

The cultural setting in which this study was carried out is another crucial factor to take into account. Significant obstacles confronting India's healthcare system include a lack of resources, a large patient population and power disparities between patients and doctors. In this situation, the communication skills training programme might have had a particularly positive effect since it enabled doctors to better traverse these challenges and give patient-centered, compassionate treatment. Investigating the cross-cultural suitability of these programmes may provide insightful information.

The results of the study also imply that improved patient relations may not be the only organisational benefit of communication skills training. Increased self-assurance and empowerment in their positions were indicated by a number of participants, which may improve teamwork, job satisfaction and overall care quality. Further research on the effects of communication training on the performance of the healthcare system and the well-being of the workforce would be beneficial.

Conclusion

The Safa Hospital's communication skills training programme proved effective in improving the patient-centered communication skills of healthcare professionals. The training resulted in self-reported gains in confidence, active listening skills and the capacity to recognise and communicate patient needs more effectively by providing participants with evidence-based tactics to promote more compassionate, cooperative conversations.

The training's interactive, hands-on approach was highly appreciated by the participants, who thought that the role-playing activities and peer/facilitator comments were more beneficial than the didactic lectures alone. The ability to learn from a variety of healthcare professions and the training's relevance to everyday practice were also mentioned as important advantages.

Even if the results were excellent overall, there were several things that may have been done better. More advice on handling difficult patient contacts, such imparting bad news or handling disobedient patients, was requested by the participants. Furthermore, continuing assistance to deepen the acquired communication skills over time may enhance the program's long-term effects.

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Ethics Statement

Permission to conduct the interviews for the purposes of this research was obtained by all respondents at Safa Hospital, including the management, who were fully informed about the purposes of this research and how their responses would be used and stored.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors of this manuscript have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest (such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge or beliefs) in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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