



Symposium on Educational Excellence 2023

The patient communication challenge: internalizing patient-centered language via game-based learning

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Active Learning Connection

Interactive by nature, the presenters will demonstrate active graphic facilitation, engaging the participants in a co-creation of two posters that outlines the argument for use of visuals in academic settings (Creating the Why). Participants will practice drawing basic icons on small- We will incorporate active learning to engage the audience by holding a game of the Patient Communication Challenge (PCC) as part of our Session. We will begin with an equity-focused discussion of health literacy, adverse health outcomes associated with lower health literacy, and the need for ongoing education of early-career healthcare personnel on the importance of using plain-language, patient-centered communication. We will introduce the game and the educational concepts incorporated into its creation and ask attendees to actively participate in playing it to practice their plain-language skills as medical students do when participating in the workshops. The PCC can be played with as few as 4 participants to over 100 participants. The medical terms used will be common terms that are familiar and accessible to everyone, regardless of their individual experience in the medical field. After playing the game, we will discuss the use of plain language and patient-centered communication among the teams and reflect on how these skills can be studied and improved through medical education to provide high-quality patient care. Using the PCC as an active learning tool will demonstrate the educational opportunity that our workshop provides, allowing attendees to recognize the challenges of using plain-language communication and the need for continual development of this skill in medical education. Our aim is that this will encourage attendees to incorporate education on these concepts, as well as the use of games as teaching tools in their respective fields.

Learning Objectives

1. Develop an understanding of how medical education teaches and studies the foundations of patient-centered communication and health literacy best practices
2. Understand the experience of teaching others patient-centered communication techniques by deconstructing medical terminology into plain language
3. Reflect on the practice of utilizing plain language and learn from student researchers studying this process in medical education

Abstract

Research Goal:

To explore the use of the Patient Communication Challenge (PCC) game as a classroom-adjunct opportunity for medical trainees to practice deconstructing medical terminology into plain language and begin to internalize effective, patient-centered clear communication strategies to explain common diagnoses, tests and procedures.

Background:

Health literacy is the ability to gather and comprehend basic health information necessary to make health-related decisions. Recent data show the majority of US adults have intermediate health literacy, while about one third are at or below the basic level. Higher health literacy is correlated with being White or Asian/Pacific Islander, exclusively speaking English before starting school, higher educational attainment, and living above the poverty line.¹ Unsurprisingly, low health literacy is associated with poor health outcomes and use of healthcare services.² Physicians are often unaware of patients' low health literacy and lack the skills to address it.³ Both Healthy People 2030 and the ACA have prioritized improving effective provider communication.^{4,5} Despite national guidelines on best practices, teaching about health literacy is neither standardized nor universal at US allopathic medical schools. Evidence suggests repeated exposure and active learning are required to build competency in this domain.^{6,7,8}

OHSU medical students formed the Patient Education Collaborative in 2019 to facilitate peer-based practice of patient-centered communication skills among early-career healthcare professionals with an adaptation of the popular game "Taboo." We piloted this activity in-person, transitioned to virtual delivery in March 2020, and recently resumed in-person workshops for preclinical medical students.

Method:

PCC workshops are held during Enrichment Weeks after didactic blocks for approximately 20 preclinical medical students per workshop, who watch a video on health literacy before attending. The hour-long workshop includes a review of patient-centered communication, the PCC game, and a post-session survey. To play, two teams compete to earn points by correctly identifying as many terms as possible in one minute as explained by a teammate who describes the term without using medical jargon. Workshops utilize a list of medical terms and corresponding "taboo" jargon highlighted in boards preparation resources.⁹

Results:

59% (53/90) of participants completed post-workshop surveys. 91% (48/53) of respondents agreed they felt more proficient in avoiding jargon, 94% (50/53) would recommend the workshop to a classmate, and 100% (53/53) would play again. Participant comments included that the PCC was a "fun and engaging way to practice avoiding medical jargon" and "a good way to check in on how well I actually understand these concepts."

Findings:

The PCC is an opportunity for trainees to practice plain language communication outside the classroom in an enjoyable format that reinforces didactic concepts through active learning, with self-reported participant satisfaction and competency gain. Given the high degree of attrition of health communication skills among medical students,⁸ offering workshops during Enrichment Week addresses the challenge of building health literacy sessions into the curriculum with adequate frequency for skill retention.¹⁰ The PCC appears to be a viable method for early medical trainees to develop and maintain health communication skills. As the PCC is currently offered to preclinical students, future applications include the expansion of the workshop to clinical rotations, GME programs, and medical specialties.

References

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