



Research Week 2023

Patient illustration challenge: expanding approaches to patient education via hand-drawn diagrams.

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Keywords

Health literacy, Education, Communication, Medical students, Patient-centered care

Abstract

Objective

Improve medical students' ability to effectively educate patients by deconstructing disease processes into hand-drawn illustrations and develop students' confidence utilizing innovative patient-centered communication strategies.

Background

Half of US adults read below an 8th-grade level, making health literacy a significant barrier in patient-provider communication. Low health literacy levels contribute to poor healthcare outcomes, and physicians often lack the tools to address this. In 2019, OHSU medical students formed the Patient Education Collaborative and adapted the popular game "Taboo" into the "Patient Communication Challenge." This workshop emphasized the importance of using patient-friendly language and resulted in 91% of participants reporting increased proficiency in avoiding medical jargon.

Methods

The pilot Patient Illustration Challenge will launch in the coming weeks for preclinical medical students. This hour-long, student-run workshop will review patient-centered communication fundamentals, host the Patient Illustration Challenge game, and administer a post-session survey. To play, a student will randomly select a disease and explain the pathophysiology using illustration and verbal description to the group as if they are patients. When the drawing is complete, the class will guess the disease. The session leader will then share an exemplar illustration and pathophysiology explanation as students in the class draw simultaneously.

Results

Results are not yet available for this pilot study. We expect self-reported gains in participant communication proficiency as assessed on a 5-point Likert scale.

Conclusions

This initiative provides medical students with opportunities to practice illustrating disease pathophysiology to enhance verbal patient education, a skill widely used in clinical settings yet not included in the OHSU curriculum. This will improve students' confidence in communicating using multimodal strategies to facilitate understanding. Given the prevalence of low health literacy, teaching students to overcome communication barriers using illustration is essential to improving their ability to both communicate effectively and contribute to a more equitable healthcare landscape.