

A Phenomenological Study of Communication Skills for the Health Care Professionals

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Abstract

Health care professionals are dealing with human in the critical conditions where due to health conditions there is immense pressure due to the expectations of nurturing live. They have to communicate news based on diagnosis and prognosis. The news which is not expected and wanted but have to be communicated. Therefore, creates the need of effective communication. It requires understanding and sensitivity of individual, emotional, social, and physical conditions. This qualitative research aims to construct the knowledge of effective communication skills for the health care professional through the phenomenology. The lived experiences of the health care professionals are analysis by creating codes and further analysing and interpreting the codes. The findings reveal interesting facts on the need of communication skills for health professionals as a coping up skill for deriving happiness and creating satisfaction in the system along with patients and family carers.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Health Care Professionals, Phenomenology, Happiness

Introduction

In medicine the communication and trust developed on the basis of communication is considered as tool for the success of the patient health and creates faith in the field of health care. A good health care professionals along with the best cognitive skills becomes the reasons of success. However, research evidence brings out the fact that there has been vexing issues of ineffective communication in the health care professionals worldwide. It has led to the chronic and severe issues of trust, faith on the system especially in the developing countries where education is limited to the fewer sections of the society and communication is the challenge amongst the people, ineffective communication hampers the medical process. The worst sufferer is the patient and his health. It is felt that competent health professionals who are appropriately skilled for their knowledge, attitudes and medical skills are the ones who create the climate of satisfaction faith and trust. Undoubtedly, more health professionals are needed with new competencies and motivation to serve the needs of society. The transformation of health professionals' education can be achieved by competent and dedicated leaders focusing on health needs and the objectives of the health services system.¹

It is felt that one of the important skill for the health professionals is of having excellent communication skills. A research on review study conducted by Siman Chant et al. found out that there is a lack of researches on communication skills of the healthcare professionals in both pre and post registration nursing education and other health care disciplines. This study recommended that there is a concern on the improved methods for future research evaluating communication skills training². In another study conducted on the challenges for

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https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/93635/9789241506502_eng.pdf;jsessionid=E0A9B66AA6AEAE4C762559F06DBF8DC?sequence=1

² <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0260691701906902>

professional training of the health professional by Robert Stout in 1997 emphasized on the attitudes of the health care professionals towards adult/elderly patients. The findings were that though the cognition level of the Health care professionals were remarkable, but they lacked in the psychosocial skills. The reason was lack of excellent communication skills. This study suggested that a mutual understanding of one another's' unique roles through shared learning experiences will go some way towards taking issue with the 'fragmented' care and communication that has been found in studies of care of the elderly patients.³

Significance of the Study

Reviews of related literature shows that research done in this field have conclude that though the importance of communication skills is required to the health professionals but there been least done in this area of utmost importance. It has been realised that the skilled communication in palliative and end-of-life care is pivotal for discussing prognosis and care planning. Despite this skill's importance, along with other skills, the focus is only on the cognitive aspects of the medical education. The psychological domain along with the psychomotor domain is majorly overlooked and it is generally not taught in basic education and therefore the critical health professionals lack in excellent communication skills as a key competency. This research intends to develop measurable and observable communication skills in the critical care professionals. It will focus on the realisation of learning objectives in terms of learning outcomes

Objective

To study the lived experiences of the health care professionals on communication skills in the perspective of critical health care.

To critically analysis the lived experiences of health care professionals on communications skills in the prespective of critical health care

Methodology

This study had a qualitative approach and has used phenomenological research method. The researcher developed the questionnaire, in-depth individual interviews and descriptive analysis techniques for the collection of the data. An In- depth individual interviews is a research methodology in which individuals engage in an intensive and in-depth reflective analysis of specific topic to explore their experiences and identify common themes based on the experiential learning. Individual in-depth interviews were also conducted to complement the content which are collected through the questionnaire to explore the deeper information developed based on experiences at the individual level. The In-depth interviews were divided into five levels namely set induction/Introductory questions, developmental questions, Probing Questions, Reflective Questions and End Questions. The purposive sampling technique was used, and 10 critical care professionals were selected. The purpose of the research was explained to them and they agreed to participate voluntarily.

The data analysis was done by data triangulation. The data collected through the questionnaire, through in-depth interviews and the descriptive analysis of the available content. This was done in order to ensure to gain the good perspectives of the different dimensions of the investigated phenomenon and not to cross validate the data. The data was recorded for collecting meaningful statements and experiences. On the bases of the communication of the experiences the themes were extracted. The extracted themes were organised. The extracted themes were validated with the original data collected. After validation a formal structure of findings were structured as a research outcome.

Findings

The findings of the study are based on the knowledge which was constructed through the process this qualitative research. The phenomenological analysis of the data is presented in the tabular form which provides the summary of the key findings in points. This table list outs the key areas which were coded for the analysis and interpretation.

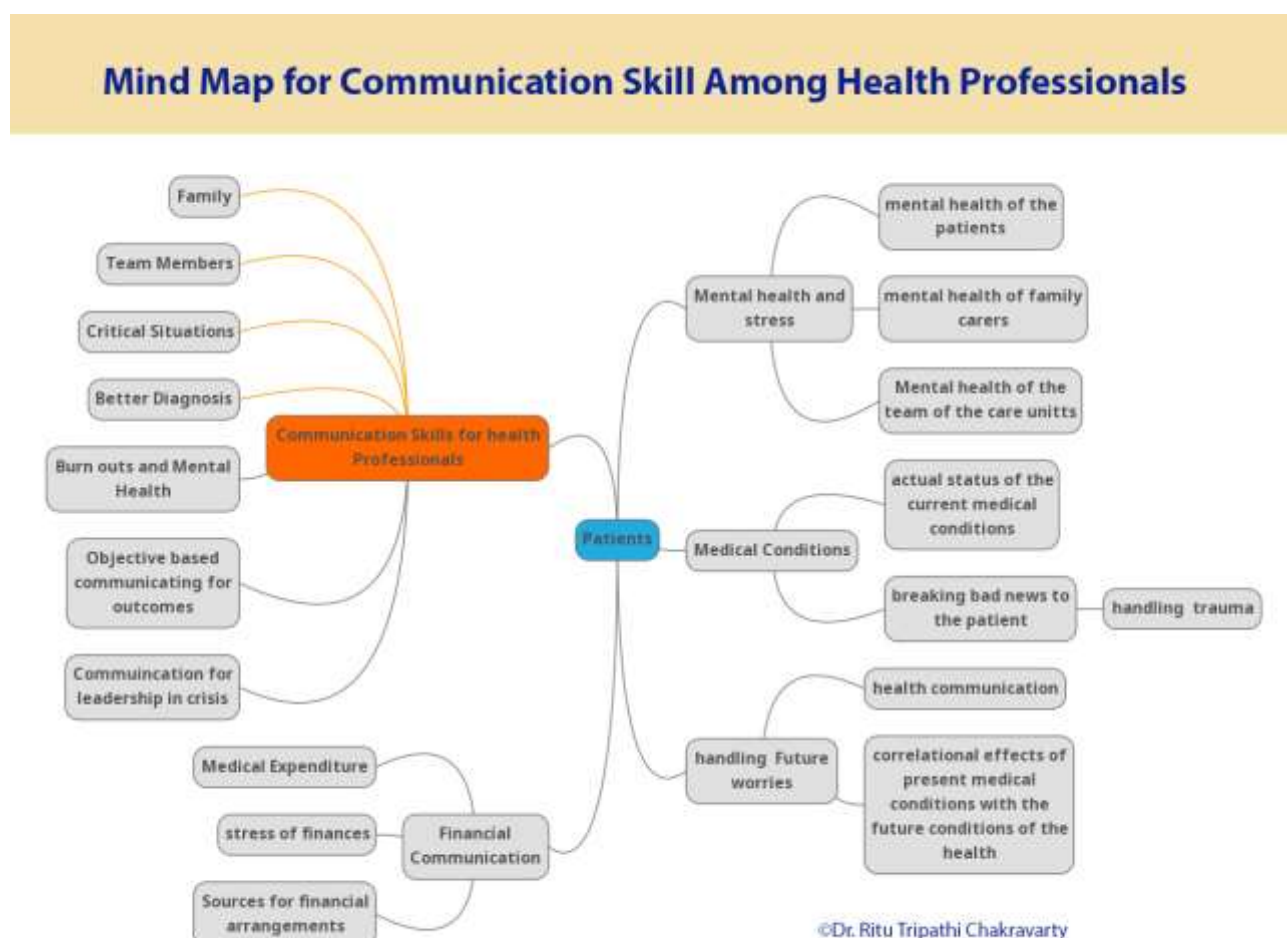
³ https://academic.oup.com/ageing/article/26/suppl_4/24/36178

Table No.1 showing Codes and its thematic Analysis

Codes	Thematic Analysis of Coded themes
Communications skills and Patients satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves Mental Health • Improves Personal Satisfaction • Focus on Holistic Care • Trust and faith on the health Care Professionals • Applies to Conscious effort
Communication skills for navigating family issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of Stress and Burn Out • Increase in awareness of patient's condition • Increase in support for managing health • Financial Preparedness • Social Preparedness
Communication skills for building teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in ownership in the system • Increase in mental health of medical professional, team members • Skilled in Communication the team members improve the working condition of the health care units • Improved Decision making • Development of error free system • Development of outcome-based diagnosis for better health care of the patients • Better support from the family
Communication skills for reasoning out in critical situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind mapping the condition of the patients • Development of reasons and logics • Better Diagnosis • Holistic care as achievement
Communication skills for better diagnose of the patients' condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Ethical considerations • Removes negatives bias for specific medical condition of patient • Increase tolerance with patient's condition • Increase in satisfaction of the Health care professional
Communication for dealing with the stress and burnouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved team management • Improved Psychological conditions • Improved relationships for better outcome • Emotional stability of professionals ,patients and related people

On the basis of the finding the mind map was created .This mind map incorporated the effects of communication skills for the system and also how effective health care professionals will create desirable outputs in the patients' health care by taking the responsibilities and increases the accountability in totality .

Figure 1 showing Mind Map for Communication Skill among Health Professionals



Communications skills and Patients satisfaction

From this research, first finding is derived that the relationship of critical care professional majorly depends upon their ability of using effective communication skills. There is an agreement to this fact but however it is admitted that the doctors over the time tends to lose their focus on the holistic care of the patient and they keep medicine as the prime importance. Due to the paucity of time and sometimes no orientation towards the needs of communication skills they have less inclination towards the psychological and mental health of the patients and their families and therefore they do not communicate with them openly. However they said that there are provisions for counsellors for communication of health issues and other concern but they confirmed that a patients only derive satisfaction when their treating doctors communicate with them. Niranjana Shendurnikar and Pareshkumar A Thakkar in their research concluded that Communication skill is practicing art which is achieved by a conscious effort and willingness in day to day practice. And should be an integral part of the medical teaching curriculum.

Communication skills for navigating family issues

Family is the important point where communication skills are needed and is the essential component of good life care, enabling patient's family to understand what is happening and to adjust to their new situations. It is realised that the medical professional bodies have set in the regulations and guidelines for laying down the importance of communications skills for the health professionals. However, from the detail analysis of the data it is evident that communication is not being done for family in a desirable manner. There is lack of communication on the cost and financial aspects of the treatment. Families also complain that the nature of disease impacts their social status. Many other issues of mental and psychological burnouts are felt within the families. One of the professional said that since the communication is normally verbal and face to face therefore there are situations where encounters between family members and professionals occurs and since family is worried and is under stress therefore wants to seek more detail information about their patient. And in

situation where health professional is more dominating and controlling the communication is very badly effected and thus there occurs a gap in correct transmission of the situation and health conditions. It may be interpreted that though there exists a positive correlation between the communications skills of health professional for helping families to navigate their conditions but it actually does not happen and therefore there lies a need of intervention for improving communication in the health professionals.

Communication skills for building teamwork

Research evidence indicates that there are strong positive and desirable co relationships between a healthcare professional and his team members and together they increase the capacity of health care unit and increase the capacity of to follow medical recommendations, self-management . A good communication between each member of the team leads to better decision making and problems are solved in much better way. From the analysis of the data it was found that due to lack of proper communication many times decision for patients are not done properly and changes of errors occurs . Extensive review of the related literature also shows that collaboration and teamwork do not always occur in clinical settings due to the lack of communication. From this research by critical analysis of the data it is suggested that collaboration is extremely required at each steps of the patient care .A good communication abilities increase the chances of better communication between doctors , nurses and other health workers and exceedingly helps in increasing each other's knowledge and helps in improving attitude and mental health of the team members as team members also face the stress and burnouts due to continuous work pressures.

Communication skills for reasoning out in critical situations .

Good communication is basis of reasoning out in critical situations and to keep balance their domains of learning which is cognitive , Affective and Psychomotor skills. For a proper handling of critical situations proper analysis of the situation is must because difficult situations are more difficult to communicate with .From the analysis of the data it is derived that the communication skills and interpersonal skills of health care professionals facilitate more accurate reasons for correct diagnosis and for giving the therapeutic instructions and establish strong relationship with the patients .However it is also accepted due to the lack of this communication skill ,dissatisfaction arises in the patients , with their families and in the critical care units .The ultimate goal of communication skills of health care professionals is to improve upon the health condition. They have to deal with the personal and social construct of information and views, and this appear as challenge for the health care professionals. They feel that there is a need to develop reasons for dealing with the patients so that they can communicate in the personal and social pretext of the patients. Outcome based learning objectives for improving communication skills is required .One of the professionals said that health care professional needs state of art communication skill modules imbibed in the regular upgradation of knowledge skills and attitudes . This helps to meet with the divergent needs and understand the different perspectives of the learners.

Communication skills for better diagnose of the patients' condition

In the research one of the Health care professional says that diagnosis is the base understanding of the medical condition but admits that effective communication to the patients and their family is a challenge. And most of the times it is communicated without keeping in consideration of the mental, psychological, and ethical considerations. Communication skills helps in increasing the tolerance of medical condition of the patients. A lot of discussion and cross communication between the health care professional helps to remove or reduce the negative bias for specific medical condition of the patients, but it is admitted that rarely health care professionals go into such detail communication. It is said that they decide the condition of the patients on their pre learnt knowledge and their experiences which they have constructed over the period of time. Learning is based in the experiences and that learning is considered to be the best which connects to the new knowledge on the pre-set of the existing knowledge .Therefore if the efforts are made to involve the experiences of two or more than two health professionals it is most likely that the better diagnosis for the critical care patients or maybe specific needs patients is done . This will yield into the satisfaction of the health professionals along with the better health and satisfaction of patients and families .It was discouraging to derive that this cross communication is not in a regular practice. Constructivist thought takes a slow pace in medical system. It is however felt that better diagnosis increases the ethical considerations which can be easily be done if effective communication skills are practice.

Communication skills for dealing with the stress and burnouts.

Research evidence based on acceptance by the health care professionals indicates that there is a stress and burned out in health care especially in the critical health care system .

This is because of the lack continuous feel for enhancing communication skills of the health care professionals. Long working hours with high demand of accuracy is the main reasons of stress and burnouts .Communication skills like active listening without reacting , learning to respond intelligently towards a given situation, learning to be emotionally intelligent by being aware of individual emotions along with the emotions of the others .One of the health professional with annual training of communication skills admits that training of communication skills improves his self-efficacy communication capability under critical conditions and has a direct impact on his mental health while others admitted that they rarely have taken initiative to go through the training on communication and no opportunities derived from their workplace. It is suggested that frequent training of communication skills should be organised along with the personal efforts to join the training program, should be taken .Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation system is needed to be developed .

Conclusion

There is a strong need of communication skills development in the health care professionals. Communication training modules should be an integral part of the medical education and regular training program should be organising for the Inservice health professional. Every successful system seeks holistic development of the stakeholders and for its beneficiaries. There is a dire need of having outcome-based learning objectives for developing effective communication skill training program. This type of program not only improves on the cognitive levels of the professionals but have positive impact on the attitudinal learning of the health care professional and thus enhance the psychomotor skills of the health care professionals. This research based on the lived experiences of the people involved suggest for the development of communication skills and recommends training of the health care professional for improving their efficiency and efficacy along with the reduction of stress and burnouts by improving upon the mental health. This research aligns the creation of happiness by creating excellent health care professional who are connecting with their patients and the system with compassion.

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