IHC Patient-Centered Communication Series:

The Empathy Effect:

Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes (EE)

Workshop

Overview

In every aspect of healthcare, trusting relationships between the healthcare team and patients are essential for optimal care. Effective communication skills promote information sharing, diagnostic accuracy and shared decision-making; they are directly related to clinical outcomes for patients; and they contribute to greater patient/client and clinician satisfaction. From the perspective of patients/clients, everyone associated with a healthcare organization is part of the constellation of caregivers; as such, everyone has opportunities to ensure that interactions with patients are positive and healing.

In healthcare, as in all human interactions, people hold ideas and feelings about others that may involve judgment, demonstrate stigma and reflect bias, which is demonstrably harmful for all people, and more so for those who are most vulnerable in our society (Blaire, 2011; Cohen, 2011; Corrigan, 2001; Lorié, 2017). Blue Shield of California Foundation, recognizing the scope and significance of trauma among safety net clinic patients/clients and employees, has funded the creation of this communication skills training program (Morrison, 2015).

Effective empathy conveyance skills are measurable, learnable skills (Drwecki, 2011; Henry, 2013). While most people who work in healthcare are drawn to service, few have exposure to explicit and intentional training focused on evidence-based communication and models for interacting with patients/clients. Combined with sound technical skills and patient-friendly systems, effective communication raises the level of patient adherence and satisfaction in measurable—and clinically significant—ways (Boodman, 2015; Flickinger, 2016; Pollak, 2007; Tamblyn, 2010).

The Empathy Effect: Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes provides a fast-paced and highly interactive workshop that combines opportunities for self-reflection and practical skill-building in structured activities and small group settings.
**Audience**

*The Empathy Effect: Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes* is designed for everyone who works in healthcare who comes into contact with patients/clients and families. We strongly recommend that all members of the healthcare team participate in *The Empathy Effect*, to build common vocabulary and expectations for evidence-based communication skills. Workshops can accommodate 6-30 learners to ensure individualized attention and optimal small group learning.

The workshop is appropriate for a wide variety of healthcare audiences, including medical, dental and mental health practices; hospitals and hospital systems; managed care organizations; medical, dental and other professional schools; specialty societies; and government agencies.

**Content**

In this 4.5-hour training, *The Empathy Effect: Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes (EE)* presents an extensive research base, a commitment to active learning and input from a diverse array of experts. The training uses structured self-reflection and focuses on practical skills that learners can bring to their daily work immediately.

The EE workshop is based on three foundational premises:

1. Empathy is healing and judgment is harmful,
2. Vulnerable populations experience greater harm by judgment and lack of empathy, and
3. We all have judgments, and we can learn to mitigate them.

IHC’s model for effective empathy conveyance embodies six essential techniques, each of which is treated in detail and with learner participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Techniques for Empathy Conveyance</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong> = Identify Your Internal and External cues</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong> = Notice Judgments and Use Counter Cues to Shift Gears</td>
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<td><strong>G</strong> = Goodwill Greeting</td>
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<td><strong>E</strong> = Empathic Language</td>
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<td><strong>A</strong> = Affirm Strengths</td>
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<td><strong>R</strong> = Reflective Listening</td>
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Throughout the workshop, learners are invited to participate in a series of exercises that are graduated to engage learners around their own experiences in a safe and supportive environment. There are
specially created video vignettes and trigger videos that are used as bases for observation and discussion.

In this workshop, as for all IHC programs, facilitators model “people-first” language, welcoming gestures, reflective listening and other effective communication skills.

An extensive annotated bibliography for this curriculum is available on IHC’s website (EE bibliography). We encourage learners to use the bibliography after the workshop as a resource for further professional development on empathy conveyance and bias reduction. The workshop also includes a detailed skill summary for the IN GEAR model. Learners are encouraged to identify one or two specific techniques to work on in the weeks following the workshop. IHC collects information (voluntarily) from all learners several weeks after the completion of the workshop to reinforce skills practice and gather additional feedback.

Expectations

*The Empathy Effect: Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes* trains healthcare personnel in all positions. Learners are expected to participate in all activities in the half-day program. To minimize distraction, IHC recommends that learners be freed from additional work-related tasks for the duration of the training.

Learning Objectives

1. List two of the three premises for empathy-based care
2. Identify the elements of the IN GEAR model for empathy conveyance
3. Identify two internal or external cues associated with interactions that invite judgment
4. Name at least one counter cue to shift from a view of judgment to one of understanding
5. Demonstrate at least two examples of conveying empathy

Methodology

*The Empathy Effect: Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes* is fast-paced and interactive, with a strong focus on opportunities to practice skills and techniques in a safe and structured environment. The majority of the workshop is interactive, combining individual and small group exercises to analyze video enactments of actual cases and role-play to apply newly leaned skills to contextually relevant cases.
Faculty

Faculty members who teach IHC’s EE workshop have completed a comprehensive faculty development program. The faculty program includes individualized coaching conducted by IHC Master Trainers to prepare faculty to teach and facilitate the workshop, deepen their own communication skills, and to explore strategies to support and advocate for greater attention to bias reduction, relationship building and communication skills at their home institutions.

CME/CE

The Institute for Healthcare Communication is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to sponsor continuing medical education for physicians. IHC takes responsibility for the content, quality, and scientific integrity of this CE/CME activity. The Empathy Effect: Countering Bias to Improve Health Outcomes is designated by the Institute for Healthcare Communication as a continuing medical education activity meeting the criteria for 4.5 hours in Category 1 of the Physician’s Recognition Award of the American Medical Association.

NOTES


Flickinger TE, Saha S, Roter D, Korthuis PT, Sharp V, Cohn J, Eggly S, Moore RD, Beach MC (2016). Clinician empathy is associated with differences in patient–clinician communication behaviors and


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