



**IHC Patient-Centered Communication Series:**

**Clinician-Patient Communication to  
Enhance Health Outcomes (CPC)**

**Workshop**

**Overview**

The benefits of effective communication between clinicians and their patients are far-reaching and well documented. Clinicians achieve greater diagnostic accuracy and patients who are actively engaged in decision-making around their care are more adherent to therapeutic regimens and more satisfied with care. Effective communication is the foundation for a strong and trusting relationship, which contributes to provider job satisfaction and decreases the likelihood of malpractice litigation. Patients are increasingly active in their own care, researching medical information, participating in health-related support activities and expecting to drive key decisions about their care. Payers are beginning to base payments on patient satisfaction scores, and the trend is expected to continue in the future.

Effective patient-centered communication skills are learnable skills. Many clinicians have had limited exposure to explicit and intentional training focused on communication and varied models for interacting with patients. Some view communication training as “fluff”: non-technical and therefore of lesser value. In fact, from the patient’s perspective, excellent technical clinical skills alone are insufficient for a satisfactory experience. Combined with sound clinical skills, effective communication raises the level of patient satisfaction in measurable—and clinically significant—ways.

IHC has published evaluative research measuring the impact of IHC workshops and professional services on physician communication behavior specific to empathic communication (Bonvicini, et al., 2009) and physician and patient satisfaction (Haskard et al., 2008). In addition, IHC has collected post-workshop data from workshop learners to evaluate the impact of the *CPC* 4-hour workshop on selected communication techniques learned in the workshop. This is accomplished by asking all workshop learners to complete a written behavioral plan identifying two techniques acquired during the workshop that they will practice in their patient interactions. These forms are collected and then sent back to the learners six weeks later. This “reminder” includes a link to an anonymous survey to assess learners’ application of the techniques in actual practice with observable effect. The following results were observed between 2008 and 2011:

- 75% of respondents reported a high rate of application of newly-learned techniques to their clinical practice.
- 66% percent of respondents reported spending increased time listening to patients and higher personal and patient satisfaction.

Clinicians at every stage of their careers find value in brief workshops focused on specific communication skills that can enhance their effectiveness and job satisfaction. ***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes*** provides a fast-paced and highly interactive workshop that gives learners opportunities to practice specific communication skills in structured activities and small group settings.

## Audience

***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes*** is designed for students and clinicians in active practice in all specialty areas. Workshops can accommodate 6-30 learners to ensure individualized attention and optimal small group learning.

The workshop is offered by a wide variety of sponsors throughout North America including malpractice insurance companies, managed care organizations, medical schools, specialty societies, government agencies, medical groups and hospitals.

## Content

***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes (CPC)*** is IHC's flagship health care communication training program. The content, principles and model used in this workshop are supported by extensive research conducted during the past thirty years in patient-centered care, healthcare communication and intra-team communication. CPC presents a patient-centered model of complete clinical care that distinguishes between two essential clinician tasks: biomedical and communication tasks. Biomedical tasks are comprised of the technical clinical skills, whereby clinicians "find and fix" patients' problems. Biomedical tasks are the major focus of formal clinician education and ongoing continuing education. Communication tasks, by contrast, have traditionally received less focused attention in clinician education and training.

***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes (CPC)*** is predicated on the "4 Es" communication model that includes the following key points:

- **Engaging** the person,
- **Empathizing** with their concerns,
- **Educating**, using clear, concise language and checking for understanding, and
- **Enlisting** the patient as a partner and focus of the care.

As with all IHC communication workshops, an [annotated bibliography](#) is provided to learners. We encourage learners to use the bibliography after the workshop as a resource for further professional development on patient-centered communication and team communication.

An additional training option includes a customized program incorporating the half-day workshop followed by two (or more) hours of practice with simulated patients and/or colleagues (portrayed by trained actors). Simulations are different from role-playing, offering enriched feedback from the perspective of the simulated patient or colleague. Interactions can be calibrated to explore specific communication challenges, and may be repeated to provide nuanced and contextually relevant practice opportunities. IHC has partnered with a number of organizations to provide this additional, highly focused training to address specific communication skill gaps. Learners apply their newly learned communication skills and problem-solving strategies in planned interactions with patients and colleagues.

## Expectations

***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes*** trains clinicians at all stages of their careers. 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. Increase learner awareness of the biomedical and communication procedures required in healthcare practice;
2. Identify key communication skills essential to learner's role in healthcare practice;
3. Provide learners with opportunities to practice key communication skills through structured activities and simulated patient interactions; and
4. Ask learners to commit to applying a minimum of two learned skills to their own patient interactions.

## Methodology

***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes*** is fast-paced and interactive, with a strong focus on opportunities to practice skills and techniques in a safe and structured environment. More than 80% of the workshop is interactive, combining individual and small group exercises to analyze video enactments of actual cases and role-play to apply newly learned skills to contextually relevant cases.

## Faculty

Faculty members who teach IHC's *CPC* workshop have completed a comprehensive faculty development program. The faculty program includes individualized coaching conducted by IHC senior 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 relationship-building and communication skills at their home institutions.

## CME/NCPD

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 CME activity. ***Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes*** is designated by the Institute for Healthcare Communication as a continuing medical education activity meeting the criteria for four hours in Category 1 of the Physician's Recognition Award of the American Medical Association.

The Institute for Healthcare Communication is also accredited by the American Association of Family Physicians (AAFP) to provide prescribed credit for continuing medical education program. This activity has been reviewed and is acceptable for up to 4 prescribed credit hours by the American Academy of Family Physicians.

The Institute for Healthcare Communication and the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing are collaborating to jointly provide this program. Nurses completing the program requirements and submitting an evaluation tool will receive a maximum of 4 continuing nursing education contact hours. The University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing is accredited as a provider of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

## Notes

Bonvicini KA, Perlin MP, Bylund CL, Carroll JG, Rouse R, & Goldstein MG. (2009). Impact of communication training on physician expression of empathy in patient encounters. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 75:3-10.

Haskard KB, Williams SM, DiMatteo MR, Rosenthal R, Kemp-White M, Goldstein MG. (2008). Physician and Patient Communication Training in Primary Care: Effects on Participation and Satisfaction *Health Psychology*, 27(5), 513–522.

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