

Abstract 18

Title: Improving Communication Skills of Medical Students through the Teach-Back Method

BACKGROUND: Debriefing is a critical component to teaching and learning communication skills in clinical clerkships (Lemmon & Strowd, 2016). The teach-back method is a communication confirmation technique used to gauge a patient's understanding after a medical conversation (Tamura-Lis, 2013). Medical students can use the teach-back approach to debrief with patients and learn how to communicate (Tamura-Lis, 2013). We aimed to assess the feasibility and impact of using a Communication Skills Training Card based on the patient teach-back method to create debriefing opportunities for medical students in medical and surgical clerkships.

METHODS: A needs assessment revealed opportunities for communication skills debriefing in the neurology and obstetrics/gynecology clerkships. Students used Communication Skills Training Cards to debrief with patients using a teach-back approach (neurology: post-rounds teach-back; obstetrics/gynecology: informed consent teach-back). Medical students rotating through clerkships at the Johns Hopkins (neurology clerkship) and Wake Forest (neurology & obstetrics/gynecology) Schools of Medicine were enrolled in this IRB-approved study. Each student was required to complete the Communication Card at least once but could continue its use with other patients. Feasibility was assessed as the percent of students who completed all components of the card, impact by quantitative and qualitative questions on its frequency of use, ability to prompt debriefing, and influence on communication skills training.

RESULTS: 262 students were enrolled; 160 (61.1%) from Wake Forest and 102 (38.9%) from Johns Hopkins. 183 cards were completed (144 in neurology, 39 in obstetrics/gynecology). 129 students (69.2%) used the card more than once. Students used the card to initiate a debrief with residents (149; 37.2%), fellow students (83; 20.7%), patients (68; 17%), faculty (55; 13.7%), or nurses (23; 5.7%). The majority (n=151; 82.1%) felt that their communication technique improved by using the card. In qualitative responses, students reported that this technique enhanced patient-provider communication, increased patient comfort, and provided support and clarity for the family.

CONCLUSION: Using a teach-back method to debrief after clinical communication encounters, either in medical or surgical clerkships, is feasible and engages students in communication skills

training discussions. This approach influenced how students communicated with patients and improved communication between patients and the provider team.

Lemmon, M. E., & Strowd, R. E. (2016). Right Brain: Breaking bad news: Communication education for neurology trainees. *Neurology*, 87(24), e285-e287.

Tamura-Lis, W. (2013). Teach-back for quality education and patient safety. *Urologic Nursing*, 33(6), 267-71, 298.