

# Good Communication is Good Medicine



**Patient-centered care** encompasses qualities of compassion, empathy, and responsiveness to needs, values, and expressed preferences of the individual patient.

- Provide clear information, based on the patient's desire for details and literacy level
- Let your patient know how important good communication is to providing quality healthcare
- Provide your patients with pen and paper and encourage note taking during the visit
- Respect and respond to the patient's values, needs and emotions
- Always convey interest in your patient – face them when speaking and convey empathy and compassion

**Cultural competence** is a set of academic and personal skills that allow us to increase our understanding of cultural differences.

- Ethnocentrism – belief that your culture is the right way
- Ask patients about their culture's belief in healing & health

## Benefits of Patient-Centered Care

Benefits to Patient	Benefits to Physician
Increased patient satisfaction	Decreased likelihood for malpractice litigation
Increased patient compliance	Increased patient loyalty
Improved self-reported health status	Increased patient volume
Improved outcomes in physical and mental functioning	Increased physician satisfaction

**Health literacy** is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services.

- 77 million Americans are unable to determine when to take a prescription medicine based on the drug label
- Be specific and concrete (e.g. “Take your pills with meals” instead of “Take them 3 times a day”)
- Avoid reviewing more than 3 issues/concepts at each visit
- Written material should be at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading level
- Repeat yourself – patients will appreciate it!

## Communication

**On average, physicians interrupt patients after 18 seconds during history.**

### Checklist for patient-centered communication:

- ✓ **Listen** with sympathy and understanding to the patient’s perceptions of the problem
  - What do you think caused your problem?
  - What do you fear about your sickness?
  - What kind of treatment do you think you should receive?
- ✓ **Explain** your perceptions of the problem
- ✓ **Acknowledge** and discuss the differences and similarities
- ✓ **Recommend** treatment
- ✓ **Negotiate** and mutually agree on treatment

### Key Skills

**Teach-back** – Ask the patient to restate information in their own words, or to demonstrate understanding of key concepts

**Plain language** – Use simple language, without any jargon. Explain with everyday examples.

**Diagramming** – Draw concepts when possible, highlight important written material. This helps repeat key information.

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For more information, visit AMSA’s complete Project-in-a-Box at <http://www.amsa.org/communicate>