

Reflections of the Participant Interns on “Training Workshop on Patient Counseling”

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Abstract

Background: Reflections is one of the core professional skills and integral component of lifelong self-learning. In this study, the reflections of the participant interns on training workshop on “patient counseling” were assessed.

Methods: This descriptive qualitative study assessed the reflections of the 74 participant interns of training workshops on “patient counseling”. The written reflections of the participant interns were taken with informed consent on “what is learnt from training workshop”; “personal thoughts or reactions about training workshop” and “how this training workshop helped you in care of patient”. The analysis for the qualitative data was done manually.

Results: Sixty (81%) respondents stated that they learnt about methods and approaches of patients counseling. Fifty-five (74%) perceived that proper counseling strengthens communication and the doctor-patient relationship which leads to patients’ good compliance with the treatment, and improved care, and outcome. Seventy (94%) participants found the training workshop very useful and helpful in acquiring the counseling skills, learning communication skills, and understanding doctor-patient relationship. Moreover, they felt that the training facilitated them in responding to COVID-19 related concerns of the patients.

Conclusion: Patients counseling training is critical for interns to understand the importance of counseling in patients’ care. Reflections can help to consolidate the learning and identify the opportunities to improve patient care and address patient safety concerns.

Keywords: communication, doctor-patient relationship, patients counseling, reflections, training workshop

Reflections and reflective practices are considered to be important components of medical education and imperative for self-directed lifelong learning. Reflections is an important feature usually considered to be personal and individual process, but group or team can reflect upon their learning.¹⁻⁵ This core professional skill has not received enough attention in medical schools of Nepal.

Patient’s understanding regarding the illness plays a vital role in the management of illness. Effective patient counseling makes the patient understand his/her illness, comply with treatment and cope up with illness.⁶ Training incoming young physician like interns in patient

counseling is critical for ensuring the quality care. For this purpose, Health Professions Training Committee of Universal College of Medical Sciences (UCMS) Bhairahawa organized training workshops on “patient counseling” for interns. The objectives of these training workshops were to train the interns how to counsel the patients about their illness and management of illness, and alleviate their anxiety and concerns about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

Reflections empower young health professionals to share their knowledge with others, help in clinical practice, and support the practitioners make sense of challenging and complicated situations.⁷ The objective of this study was to assess the reflections of the interns who participated in training workshop on “patient counseling”.

METHODS

This descriptive qualitative study assessed the reflections of participant interns of training workshops on “patients counseling”. Three training workshops on “patient counseling” for interns, each of 90-minutes duration were organized by Health Professions Training Committee of

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Universal College of Medical Sciences, Teaching Hospital (UCMS-TH), Bhairahawa on Saturday, August 1, 2020. Three trainings in sequence were conducted by one of the authors (RMP) as the principal resource persons and facilitated by the co-author (NS). The interactive training methods were used to train interns such as interactive tutorial, role play, and scenario-based interaction session. Out of 83 interns of 17th batch of UCMS-TH, 77 participated in three training workshops; 27 in the first (Group A), 25 in the second (Group B), and 25 in the third (Group C). For each group, one out of the following three scenarios was used for the role play during the workshops-

Group A: Counseling a child with seizure disorder

A-14-years old child is suffering from the seizure disorder who developed first seizure at the age of 5 years. Parents and child have a fear of getting COVID-19. Counsel the parents and child about taking medications for seizure disorder and relieve their anxiety with regard to COVID-19.

Group B: Counseling an elderly with diabetes mellitus

A-65-year elderly patient is suffering from diabetes mellitus for last 10 years. He is worried about getting infected with COVID-19. Counsel the patient about disease process of diabetes mellitus and alleviate the worry of patient with regard to COVID-19.

Group C: Counseling adult female with chronic kidney disease

A-45-years female is recently diagnosed as chronic kidney disease. She has concerns related to COVID-19. Counsel the patient about management of chronic kidney disease and take care of her concerns about COVID-19.

After the workshop feedback of the participants were taken in the form of reflections to motivate interns, very young incoming healthcare professionals, to become reflective practitioners. Three statements were incorporated in reflections format: 1) What is learnt from the training workshop on "patient counseling"? 2) Your personal thoughts or reactions about the training workshop, and 3) How this training workshop helped you in the care of patients? Participants were asked to write one sentence response to each statement. The qualitative data were compiled, and statements analyzed manually.

RESULTS

Out of 77 participant interns of training workshop; 74 provided the written reflections. The response rate was 96%. The qualitative findings are mentioned under three head-

ings: 1. What is learnt from training workshop on "patient counseling"? 2. Your personal thoughts or reactions about the training workshop on "patient counseling", and 3. How this training workshop helped you in care of patients?

1. What is learnt from the training workshop on "patient counseling" ?

When asked for reflections about the learning from the training workshop, 60 (81%) respondents stated that they learnt about methods and approaches of patient counseling. Fifty-five (74%) respondents highlighted that communication skills are imperative for effective patients counseling, one should be good listener, be conscious with their verbal and non-verbal responses, express empathy, and be polite in explaining the patients' queries. Twenty (27%) interns mentioned they learnt that counseling strengthens management plan of the patients, improve patients' satisfaction and disease outcome. Moreover, they mentioned that this training had facilitated them in responding to the COVID-19 related concerns of the patients.

2. Your personal thoughts or reactions about training workshop on "patient counseling"

Fifty-five (74%) respondents perceived that proper counseling strengthens the doctor-patient relationship which leads to patients' good compliance with the treatment, and improves care, and outcome. Fifty (67.5%) mentioned that workshop sessions were very interactive, informative, and effective. Twenty-two (29.7%) participants suggested that such workshops should be conducted in future as well. Eighteen (24.3%) stated that patient counseling is the foremost skills to become a good doctor. Ten (13.5%) participants thought that counseling helps in rapport building, and development of professionalism skills.

3. How this training helped you in care of patients?

Seventy (94%) participants found the training workshop very useful and helpful in acquiring the counseling skills, learning communication skills, and understanding the doctor-patient relationship. They mentioned that giving emphasis on patient's problems, worries, and concerns, focusing on their queries and treatment and understanding the behavior of patient and relatives minimize the stress of patient and family.

DISCUSSION

Reflective practice is widely assumed to be a part of

healthcare practice. Health practitioner must be reflective.⁸ This descriptive qualitative study assessed the reflections of participant interns of training workshops on "patients counseling."

Participant interns of this study recognized the importance of counseling skills and perceived that they are critical for noble medical practice. They stated that communication skills are imperative for effective patient counseling and they perceived that proper counseling strengthens the doctor-patient relationship which leads to good compliance. Jacob KS emphasizes that counseling skills are essential for good medical practice, a good doctor-patient relationship is the cornerstone of good medical practice and doctor-patient communication is an integral part of quality medical care and has an important influence on clinical outcome.⁹

Participants reflected that the one-should be a good listener, be conscious with verbal and non-verbal responses, express empathy, and be polite in explaining the patients' queries. Jacob KS also emphasized on these elements.⁹

All participants reflected that the training workshop was very useful and helpful in acquiring counseling skills, learning communication skills and understanding doctor-patient relationship. They mentioned that giving emphasis on patient's problems, worries, and concerns, focusing on their queries and treatment and understanding the behavior of patient and relatives minimizes the stress of patient and family. Professional counseling educators emphasize that the patient-clinician relationship and therapeutic alliance influences response to treatment and health outcomes.¹⁰

The limitation of our study is that our findings cannot be generalized as this study was conducted only in one medical college of Nepal.

CONCLUSION

Patients counseling training is critical for the interns to understand the importance of counseling in patient care. Reflections can help to consolidate the learning and identify the opportunities to improve patient care and address patient safety concerns related to COVID-19.

DECLARATIONS

Ethics approval and consent to participate: Ethical approval obtained from Institutional Review Committee of UCMS-TH. Informed consent was taken from the participants.

Consent for publication: Not applicable

Availability of data and materials: The datasets used and/

or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request. All relevant data are within the manuscript and its supporting information files.

Competing interest: None

Funding: None

Authors' contributions: RMP: concepts, design, literature search, data acquisition, statistical analysis, manuscript preparation, and manuscript editing/ review. SP: design, literature search, data acquisition, statistical analysis, and manuscript editing/ review/ approval. NS: literature search, and manuscript editing/ review/ approval. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

Acknowledgement: We highly acknowledge the participants interns for their active participation and providing reflections, and recognize the support of management and secretarial staff of UCMS-TH, Bhairahawa, Nepal.

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How to Cite

Piryani RM, Piryani S, Sharma N. Reflections of the participant interns on "Training workshop on patient counseling". *JBPKIHS*. 2020;3(2): 33-35.