

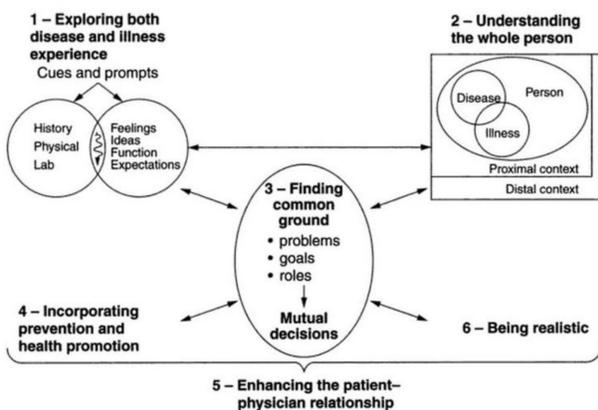
Teaching med students about personal communication style and its effect on doctor-patient communication.

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Background

- Patient centred communication is a core concept in healthcare and is shown to improve health outcomes, patient satisfaction, and professionals' job satisfaction.
- A well-known model of patient centred care consists of 6 dimensions (Stewart 2004).



- One of the ways in which dimensions 5 and 6 can be achieved, is when physicians are aware of their own communication style (CS) and its effect on the patient. Communication style is determined by personality and contextual factors.
- This self-awareness is not easily developed and to gain self-awareness education and training is needed.

Therefore, we introduced a new longitudinal elective course "Your communication style as a doctor" in our communication skills training program (CST) at the Radboudumc medical school.

Methods

The course consists of three consecutive modules (1.5h each in year 1, 2, and 3, in groups of 16 medical students).

Year	What to learn	How to learn
1	education different CS, awareness own preferred CS in general and in doctor-patient communication and its effect	home-assignments (online self-assessment, 360gr feedback, introductory micro lecture, literature) and a group session (reflection on home-assignments, videos on theory of communication style with observation assignments).

Follow-up:
self-study assignment on how to implement what has been learned in daily practice

Year	What to learn	How to learn
2	insight relation own preferred CS and own norms and values related to future profession	home-assignments (self-assessment on own socialisation, self evaluation CS and preferred professional style, micro lecture on interaction model Ellis) and a group session (reflection home-assignments, case discussion)
3	experience effect own CS in doctor-patient communication	simulated patients communication stations with written scenarios

Follow-up:
self-study assignment on how to implement what has been learned in daily practice

Results

43 First-year medical students attended module 1 in Jan 2016, when it ran for the first time. In 2017 module 2 is planned to start.

A student survey after module 1 (n=43) resulted in very positive feedback, varying from 'tailor-made personal feedback' to 'very insightful on how communication style effects interaction' and 'nice to have an interactive group session with exploration of one's own communication style'.

Overall, students liked the small group size and reflection on own behaviour.

Discussion

This course on discovering your own communication style as a doctor aims to enhance self-awareness and understanding of one's own communication style, and the effect on the doctor-patient encounter.

We expect this will improve patient centred communication, but research will be needed to show if it does.

Conclusion:

This course is a first step in improving patient centred communication through teaching students their own preferred communication style embedded in their personal background. This enhances self knowledge and insight, resulting in possible better patient-doctor relationships and being realistic as a doctor.

References

Stewart, M. M., L.; Ryan, B. L.; Brown, J. B. (2004). *The patient perception of patient-centeredness questionnaire (PPPC)*. Working Paper Series. London, Ontario Canada, The University of Western Ontario.