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# Improving Communication Skills Among Doctors and Nurses in the Children Emergency Department (ED), KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH)

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## Introduction

Effective communication is paramount to practicing patient centered care, and cultivating this skill is a vital component in the training of all healthcare personnel.

There is an increasing number of complaints in our children emergency department, out of which 60% is related to communication lapses. The team reviewed complaints and compliments received in the Children Emergency department over the last 12 months via emails and feedback forms which helped to identify the needs to be addressed in this workshop.

## Aim(s)

The objective of the workshop is to implement a comprehensive blended communication program to teach and improve the communication skills and improve the confidence level of all staff of the department of emergency medicine in dealing with challenging communication situations as well as to reduce communications related patient feedback over a period of 8 months, from August 2017 to March 2018.

## The Curriculum

3 stages of development and 4 themes were identified for the development of the curriculum content.

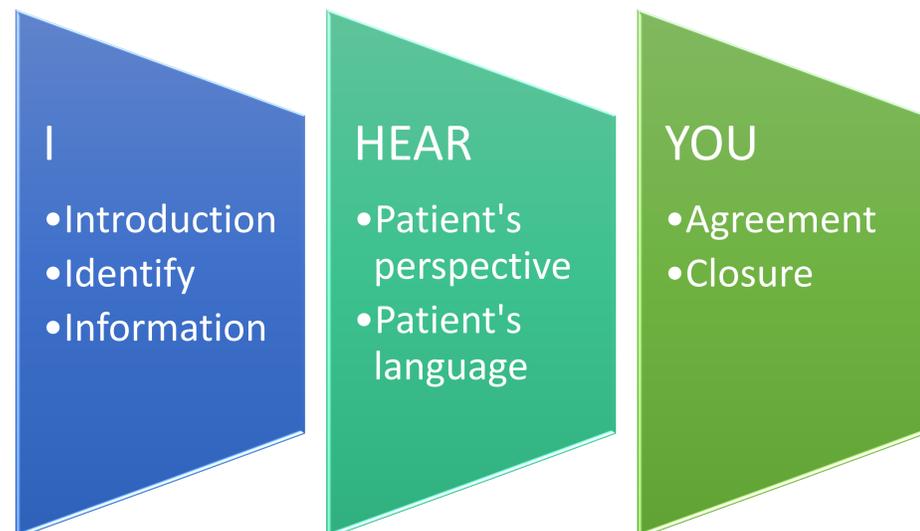
STAGE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment of top 10 patients' complaints in the ED over the last 1 year</li> <li>Pilot interview with doctors and nurses about communication lapses and needs</li> <li>Meeting with HOD and nursing director to identify teaching faculty and feasibility of the project</li> <li>Creating videos and uploading to online portal for viewing, forming teaching concepts, simulation scenarios and planning of flow for classroom teaching</li> <li>Running pilot sessions for feedback and improvement</li> </ul>
STAGE 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the workshop/ programme</li> <li>Held every Tuesday afternoon, from 1 January 2018 to 31st December 2018</li> <li>2 facilitators, 6 participants (3 doctors and 3 nurses from the ED)</li> <li>Teaching workshop consists of: Pre-course reading material and videos, face to face classroom sessions and discussions with simulations, feedback and evaluation</li> </ul>
STAGE 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluation of programme and improvement</li> <li>Ongoing training for teaching faculty</li> <li>Monitoring improvement/ reduction in patients' complaints in the ED</li> </ul>

The 4 themes are:

(A) Perception of waiting time and handling of dissatisfied patients, (B) information delivery and expressive quality, (C) physician's attitude and lack of empathy/ inappropriate use of body language (D) physician's explanation of illness and treatment.

There are 2 main parts for this course; a pre-course web-based, self-directed, learning module with videos on 5 different scenarios, followed by a 3 hour tutor-guided workshop consisting of sessions going through scenarios in the videos, real face to face session with patients or simulated patients.

The themes are used in the creation of videos, scenarios and developing the concept of "I Hear You".



## Evaluation

Gathering qualitative feedback from participants via feedback forms and focus group interviews, as well as monitoring reduction in communication-related complaints in the ED to evaluate effectiveness of the communication workshop.

## Result

Immediately after the course, 95% of the participants felt that they were able to frame their communications better.

Focus group interviews revealed 4 themes:

- Increased empowerment of staff ("I felt more empowered when I spoke to parents.", "The course made me feel part of the team and that I was solving issue when speaking to parents.")
- Improved focus of communication with parents ("I always tried to focus back on the patient rather than the unimportant issues and that helped.")
- Reduced feeling of incompetence when dealing with difficult parents ("I felt confident immediately after the course and used key words when speaking to parents, rather than going blind.")
- Increased understanding of main issues and parental needs ("Parents usually have a valid point, we just need to figure it out and respect that.")

## Conclusion

Good communication skills are an essential component of physician training. Patient-centric communication workshops have been shown to improve emergency department (ED) doctors' communication skills, with a corresponding increase in patient satisfaction and reduction of complaints against ED doctors.