



Presentation at BVA Congress

27-29 September 2007
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Consultation Skills

**BVA Congress, Belfast
27 Sept 2007**

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AIMS

- Why communication skills are important
- Specific skills that influence doctor-patient relationships
- How consultation skills can be taught
- Process and outcomes of the SPVS roadshows
- Outline of a consultation model
- A taster of looking at consultation skills

Some questions

- ▶ Why bother with communication skills?
- ▶ Do doctors deliver what patients want?
- ▶ Can communication skills can be taught and learned?
- ▶ How can this be done?

Today's pressures for GPs

- 10 mins consultation at best
- High patient expectations
- Often non-english speaking, 3rd party
- Target-driven payments ? Patient mistrust
- Cost per case for minor ops etc
- Need for accurate data entry
- Loss of continuity, OOH, dual registration
- Turnover of staff

Background

- Communication skills are a core clinical skill (WHO; GMC)
- Diagnoses made more frequently from interview data than all other sources added together
- Drs conduct up to 200k interviews over 40 year career

Clinical Competence

- The ability to integrate:
- Knowledge base
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving ability

6 reasons to do it well

1. Doctors identify their patients' problems more accurately. Maguire et al. BMJ 1986; 292: 1573-1578
2. Patients are more satisfied with their care and can better understand their problems, investigations, and treatment options → fewer complaints
3. Patients are more likely to adhere to treatment and to follow advice on behaviour change. Silverman, Kurtz, Draper. Skills for communicating with patients. Radcliffe Medical Press, 1998.

(lots of evidence!)

4. Patients' distress and their vulnerability to anxiety and depression are lessened. Roter et al. Arch Intern Med 1995; 155: 1877-1884
5. Doctor is more time-efficient
6. Doctors' own wellbeing is improved. Ramirez et al.. Lancet 1995; 16: 724-728

Evidence for consultation skills training

- All this is driven by an extensive evidence base
- At all levels, from medical students to senior doctors
- Specialists and general practice equally
- Aspergren K (1999) Teaching and Learning Communication Skills in Medicine: a review with quality grading of articles. Medical Teacher 21 (6)

Medical school history-taking

- History of present complaint
- Past medical history
- Smoking/alcohol/drugs
- Then diagnose and treat = Easy!!

Do we let patients talk?

Research by many eg:

- Marvel *et al* (1999)
 - Subjects: experienced primary care physicians (N = 27)
 - audiotaped interviews with real patients (N = 264)

Answer = No

- Average interruption time – 23.2 sec
- Block – 28% closed question; 14% statement
- Completed concerns – 27.7 sec

Some Desired Outcomes

- Patient satisfaction
- Reduced risk of complaints
- Adherence to treatment programme
- Improved health outcomes

What Do Patients Want?

- **Little *et al* (2001)**: Questionnaire study of 824 GP patients
 - Various aspects of patient-centred approach rated on scale
 - Administered before & after consultation
 - Completed medical interview satisfaction scale

Results

- Wanted Dr to do various things approx 70%, actually got them about 45% eg:
 - Clearly explain what problem is
 - Clearly explain what should be done
 - Find out how serious problem is
 - Listen to everything I have to say about my problem

Compliance: some definitions

- Obtaining prescriptions
- Taking required treatment dose each day
- Completing treatment for suggested period
- Dropping out / non-attendance
- Not implementing behaviour change
- Inconsistently applying behaviour

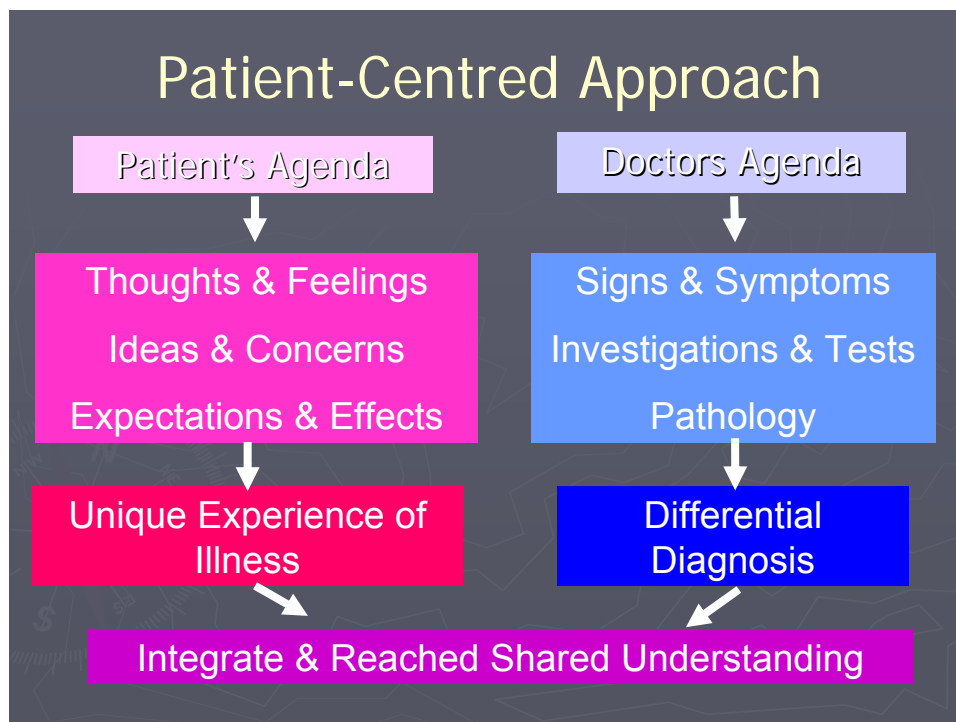
Non-Compliance: Some facts

- About 1/2 medicines not taken as prescribed
- Increases with:
 - tx complexity & length
 - shaping well-established habits (e.g. exercise, diet)

A patient-centred approach

Significantly increases compliance

- Patients share control of the consultation, including management decisions *and/or*
- Focus in the consultation is on the patient as a whole person with individual preferences (in contrast to a focus on a body part or disease).



Can communication skills be learned?

- Communication is a series of learnt skills
- Experience is a poor teacher
- Skills need to be refreshed

Teaching communication skills – lessons from the evidence

- Systematic delineation and definition of the skills
- Observation of learners
- Video or audio recording and review
- Well-intentioned feedback
- Rehearsal
- Active small group or 1:1 learning

New RCVS CertAVP

- New RCVS modular postgraduate Certificate accredited by RCVS on March 1, 2007
- Consultation Skills have finally become compulsory for all postgrad Certs issued by the RCVS

Why the need?

- Limited opportunities for experienced vets to refresh consulting skills
- Vet dominated consultations are by far the commonest
- Significant performance variation in vets
- 80% complaints to RCVS/VDS are related to communication
- Missed opportunities in client understanding, compliance, trust
- Time management and stress

SPVS Roadshows

- Most vets (SPVS Masters survey 2002) give priority to clinical subjects over consulting skills
- Consultation roadshows set up by Paul Manning
- Aims included reflection on practice
- Interactive sessions

Evaluations

- *Made me think about things from the clients point of view*
- *It gave me a lot of insight into how I have been going wrong and how I might improve my consulting skills*
- *Should result in increased customer satisfaction, better job satisfaction and increased practice turnover*

Content examples

- Consultation models
- Brainstorming sessions
- Sharing experiences
- Looking at performance

Consultation models

- Break down the consultation into tasks
- The Cambridge-Calgary is only one of many
- Enables focus on specific aspects

Cambridge - Calgary

Providing

Structure

- Initiating the Session
- Gathering Information
- Explanation and Planning
- Closing the Session

Building

The
Relationship

Further reading

- Manning, P.R. (2003) 'Consultations in Veterinary General Practice.' MSc thesis. Middlesex University.
- Manning, P.R. (2007) 'The new RCVS Certificate :CertAVP – a change for the whole profession'. *Vet Review Jan Pp 27-31*
- Neighbour R. *The Inner Consultation*: MTO Press; Lancaster, 1987
- Silverman J, Draper J, Kurtz SM. *Teaching and Learning Communication Skills*, Radcliffe Medical Press, 1998.

THE END

