

Radkovskaya A.I.
NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN HEALTHCARE
Scientific supervisor senior teacher I.Y. Abedkovskaya
Department of Foreign Languages
Belarusian State Medical University, Minsk

Topicality. Good communication is the foundation of any successful relationship. The ability to understand and use nonverbal communication, or body language, is a powerful tool that can help people connect with each other, express what they really mean, and build better relationships. Healthcare professionals should be able to read a number of nonverbal cues to gain a greater understanding of their patients' feelings and needs, demonstrate their attention to the patients because when interacting with others we continuously give and receive wordless signals.

Objective. To analyze patients' satisfaction and physician-patient interaction during consultations, to demonstrate the importance of non-verbal communication in healthcare and to study the use of non-verbal communication by the students of BSMU.

Materials and methods. Topical literature was studied and questionnaires were developed and used to find out the level of knowledge and the use of non-verbal communication on a daily basis by the students of BSMU. To get information about patients' satisfaction and physician-patient interaction during consultations a survey was conducted in several polyclinics and hospitals. It helped to assess agreement during the consultation. Participation was voluntary and confidential. The patients were asked to complete the questionnaire in the waiting room directly after the consultation. In the patient's absence, the physician completed a similar questionnaire. The interaction was measured by assessing the differences between the physicians' and the patients' opinions.

Results. The study reveals a high level of knowledge of non-verbal communication and gave information about the its use on a daily basis by the students of BSMU. The survey shows that patients feel comfortable if eye contact is established by the doctor in order to develop the patient-doctor relations (87%) and the respondents feel that this is a sign of paying attention to their complaints (92%). They also think that eye contact should be brief but regular rather than only when patient is talking about symptoms (75%). The study also reveals that touch on the shoulder (68%) or upper back (75%) is acceptable. However, the healthcare professional should take into consideration gender appropriateness, as well as the religious and cultural background of the patient. The results demonstrate the importance of touch and eye contact during the medical consultation. The research shows that patients and physicians have a high level of agreement in responses (response rate doesn't differ greatly). Lack of agreement between the patient and the physician is associated with a negative medical consultation. A greater physician-patient agreement during consultations is associated with higher patient satisfaction. The study of patient satisfaction is useful in assessing medical consultation quality.

Conclusion. Treating patients with respect and giving them full attention is the key to effective nonverbal behavior. The doctor's attention, eye contact, body movements, touch, time-consciousness encourage the patient to be open with the doctor. Positive, effective, and sensitive nonverbal behavior helps to strengthen the doctor-patient bond. Nonverbal communication enables physicians to persuade and empower patients. Being able to read the patient's body language and facial expressions make doctors' work more effective. Nonverbal behavior can be an important diagnostic tool increasing the physician's comprehension of words spoken or thoughts left unsaid.