



American College  
*of Radiology*™

# RADIOLOGY COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING MODULE

UMass Medical Center and  
University of Massachusetts Medical School

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# Introduction

- Good communication skills are important to foster a good doctor/patient or doctor/referring clinician relationship.
- There is a growing emphasis on teaching communication skills to medical students, residents and trainees.
- Simulation has been used to allow doctors practice their communication skills in a safe setting and get feedback on how to improve.

# Essential Elements of Communication

1. Build the doctor-patient relationship
2. Open the discussion
3. Gather information
4. Understand the patient's perspective
5. Share information
6. Reach agreement on problems and plans
7. Provide closure



# First Things First

Make sure the **FIRST** thing you do when meeting a patient is introduce yourself

- Name
- Title
- Role in patient's care

Example: " I am Dr.Carolynn DeBenedectis, I am a radiologist and I read your mammogram today."



# Build the Doctor-Patient Relationship

- Greet and show interest in the patient and their family.
- Use words that show care and concern throughout the interview.
- Use tone, pace, eye contact, and posture that show care and concern.
- Respond explicitly to patient and family statements about idea and feelings.



# Open the Discussion

- Allow the patient and family to complete opening statement without interruption.
- Ask "is there anything else?" to elicit full set of concerns.
- Explain and/or negotiate an agenda for the visit.

# Gather Information

- Address patient and family statements using open- ended questions.
- Clarify details as necessary with more specific or "yes/no" questions.
- Summarize and give the patient and family opportunity to correct and add information.
- Transition effectively to additional questions.

# Understand the Patient's Perspective

- Ask about life events, circumstances, other people that might affect health.
- Elicit patient's and family's beliefs, concerns, and expectations about illness and treatment.





# Share Information

- Assess patient's/family's understanding of problems and desire for more information.
- Explain using words that patient/family can understand.
- Ask if the patient/family has any more questions

# Reach Agreement on Problems and Plans

- Include the patient / family in choices and decisions to the extent they desire.
- Check for mutual understanding of diagnostic and/or treatment plans.
- Ask about acceptability of diagnostic and / or treatment plans.
- Identify additional resources as appropriate.

# Provide Closure

- Ask if the patient and family have questions , concerns or other issues.
- Summarize
- Clarify future time when progress will again be discussed.
- Provide appropriate contact information if interim questions arise.
- Acknowledge patient and family, and close interview .



# Additional Elements of Communication

1. Demonstrate empathy
2. Communicate accurate information
3. Types of communication scenarios in radiology

DeBenedictis CM, Gauguet JM, Makris J, Brown SP, Rosen MP. *Coming Out of the Dark: A curriculum for teaching and evaluating radiology residents' communications skills through simulation.* J Am Coll Radiol. 2017 Jan; 14(1):87-91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jacr.2016.09.036>

# Demonstrate Empathy

- Demeanor is appropriate to the nature of the conversations.
- Show compassion and concerns.
- Identify / label / validate patient's and family's emotional responses.
- Respond appropriately to patient's and family's emotional cues.



# Communicate Accurate Information

- Accurately convey the relative seriousness of the patient's condition.
- Take other participating clinician's input into account.
- Clearly convey the expected disease course.
- Clearly present and explain options for future care.
- Give enough clear information to empower decision making.

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# Types of Communication Scenarios in Radiology

1. Error and apology
2. Breast Imaging Results / Bad news
3. Telephone Skills / Dealing with an angry clinician
4. Discussing findings with parents of a pediatric patient
5. Talking with patients about the need to change or cancel a procedure at the time of the procedure
6. Explaining the risk of radiation



# Scenario Specific Communication Skills

## Error and Apology

- Frankly disclose that an error was made.
- Accept responsibility for error.
- Sincerely apologize for the error.
- Do not be ambiguous, be clear and use layman's terms.



# Scenario Specific Communication Skills

## Cancel / Change Procedure

- Clearly state the procedure needs to be canceled or changed in layman's terms.
- Clearly state the reason for the change/cancellation in layman's terms.
- Do not assign blame / put changes in a positive light.

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