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Nonverbal Communication: Does it Make a Difference?

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PICO Statement

Population – Caregivers and their patients

Intervention – nonverbal communication interventions

Comparator – There is no current consistent use of nonverbal communication education or awareness

Outcome – Increased patient satisfaction and involvement in care

Abstract

Nonverbal communication (NVC) is crucial to a patient's overall health and wellbeing. In the immediate past and current environment of wearing masks with all patient interactions, NVC might have even added significance. The purpose of this literature research project is to determine whether patients experience higher levels of satisfaction and involvement in their care when NVC measures are implemented. To accomplish this, several different studies regarding the effects of NVC on patient satisfaction were examined. The data for the project was obtained by combing through professionally reviewed nursing journals and research articles. Some of the research focused on the impact of educating students on NVC and the importance of NVC when interacting with patients. Other research included feedback from elderly patients explaining how NVC affects their care. These studies found that NVC education promotes awareness and interest in NVC, which leads to increased levels of patient satisfaction and fulfillment.

Background

Nonverbal communication commonly includes:

- Physical and environmental objects
- Touch, gestures, expressions
- Tone and silence
- Physical appearance

55/38/7 Formula: Communication is 55% body language, 38% voice tone, and 7% verbal communication

Analyzing the Problem

- Lack of standardized NVC education/implementation in healthcare facilities
- Strained rapport between patient and care provider
- Miscommunication and reluctance between patient and care provider
- Lower levels of active participation/compliance in care
- Cultural competency
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) negatively impacting NVC



Interventions

- Education to identify emotional and nonverbal cues of patients, which has been shown to identify unique, recognizable signals for certain emotions
- Education on how body language, gestures, tone of voice and other forms of NVC affect patients
- Encouraging patient input on NVC
- Consider verbally acknowledging NVC ("I can empathize with how you are feeling")
- Encourage staff to seek counseling or guidance when they are experiencing stressful situations
- Implement a system encouraging NVC
- Educate on cultural communication differences

Outcomes

- Education courses over NVC led to higher levels of interest and awareness in students (Park & Park, 2018)
- Receiving feedback on NVC after patient simulation led to increased patient satisfaction after a second interaction (Park & Park, 2018)
- Positive NVC behaviors portrayed by nurses led to improved self-esteem, well-being, health status, faith, gratification, and overall satisfaction among the elderly (Wanko Keutchafo, Kerr & Jarvis, 2020)

Gaps in the Literature

- There are not many studies over nonverbal communication
- Only a few of these studies specifically pertain to patient outcome

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