Hi-Touch Healthcare: The Critical Six Soft Skills

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module:

Information and Communication Technologies

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Independent Training Module

Competency Domain:
Communication

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"GRAB-N-GO" Independent Training Module

Background Information

The landscape of healthcare has become increasing complex as patient illnesses become more acute and the work environment becomes more highly technical. [i] In this environment it is even more critical that all healthcare members collaboratively work together to find and provide safe and high quality care treatment options for patients. In an effort to make interprofessional communication more efficient, expedient, and effective, electronic forms of patient communication such as telecare, email, text messaging, and social media are on the rise.[ii] However, many errors and mistakes in healthcare can be tied to poor communication[iii], often exacerbated by the use of the internet, electronic medical records, and social media.[iv]

Some practitioners perceive the move from "practicing direct patient care to spending time behind the computer" as a transformation of the patient as a person into the "patient as an icon or iPatient".[v] The impact of technology on the delivery of healthcare is not limited to the patient and healthcare member relationship. Technology also impacts the communication between and amongst healthcare providers. Thus, it is important that all healthcare members understand the significant impact communication technologies can have on the various relationships in a healthcare setting, all of which are vitally important to the delivery of high quality patient care. This module focuses on the impact that information and communication technologies have on healthcare communication by exploring both the advantages and the disadvantages, thus enabling healthcare members to be more deliberate in their use of technology enhanced communication.

How Do You Use Technology?

Goal: Participants will experience how information and communication technologies can negatively influence the delivery and reception of information.

Learning Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this Grab-N-Go session, participants will be able to:

1) Apply specific behavioral techniques for improved communication.
2) Demonstrate an increased understanding of the basic principles involved in effective and ineffective communication.
3) Identify critical elements into his/her own patterns of using information and communication technologies.
4) Illustrate greater sensitivity toward verbal and non-verbal elements of information and communication technologies.

WIIFM: What's in it for me? As more and more technology emerges and enters our lives, the communication associated with those technologies has also evolved. As we study and improve our communication competencies, it is important that we consider the impact these evolving communication technologies are having on the way we communicate.

Materials Provided:

1. Information and Communication Technologies PowerPoint (45 – 60 minutes)
2. Activity #1: Channel-Lean or Channel-Rich (10 - 15 minutes)
3. Activity #2: Change the Channel (10 - 15 minutes)

Activity preparation information is included in this document and/or within the PowerPoint presentation notes. Each PowerPoint slide, as appropriate, includes detailed explanations and instructions for the trainer. As with all Grab-N-Go Modules, you can use the whole package for a more detailed training, *or simply use one or two of the many activities—a la carte style!*

Goal: To demonstrate what communication cues are lost in the use of information communication technologies and the impact from the loss of communication cues.

Materials:
- ☐ Blank sheet of paper for each participant
- ☐ PowerPoint Slide #7

Procedures:

1. Instruct participants to write down the most recent technological change that impacts how they intake, document, share, or report patient information.

2. Instruct participants to pair up and discuss how this technological change has impacted the way they interact with colleagues and/or patients.

3. Facilitate a discussion in which you point out that information communication technologies are "channel-lean" forms of communication. In other words, the only point of reference for understanding the information or messages are the "words." In contrast, face-to-face communication is "channel-rich" because multiple social cues are available (body language, tone of voice, etc.).

   - Divide large group into partnerships. Using their examples of recent technological changes, ask partners to apply their understanding of "channel-lean" and "channel-rich" by comparing /contrasting the communication cues available in face-to-face communication and information communication technologies.

4. Lead a large group discussion in which the partners share their lists with the large group. More than likely, the following "cues" will be discussed:

   - Eye contact
   - Tone of voice
   - Gestures
   - Facial expressions
   - Contextual cues (location and situation)
   - Posture
   - Immediate feedback
   - Physical proximity (space)
   - Rate of speech (urgency or lack of)

- Touch
- Smell

How do channel-rich situations impact the ability to deliver quality health care?

How do channel-lean situations impact the ability to deliver quality health care?

What is gained and lost by using information communication technologies?

5. Lead a large group discussion in which the partners share their strategies for improving their use of information communication technologies.

Goal: To demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of information communication technologies in the delivery of healthcare.

Materials:
- ☐ Blank sheet of paper for each participant
- ☐ PowerPoint Slide #13

Procedures:

1. Instruct the participants to individually complete parts 1 – 3. Provide the following instructions:

Part One: Using your cell phones, read the last three cell phone text messages that you sent and note the following on the sheet of paper provided:
- Why did you send the message via text rather than use another technology (e.g. phone call or email)?
- Did you use abbreviated type-- txt msg or full sentences? Why or why not?
- Finally, what if you were required to use a different technology to send the same message? What would change? (your degree of comfort? the content of the message? . . . .) Write down a few of your thoughts.

Part Two: Using your cell phone again, list your last three phone *conversations.*
- How were the messages similar or different to those you texted? Why?
- Did the types of people differ based on the different technologies?
- Make notes of any other observations you notice:
    - o Were the emotional contexts different?
    - o Were there nonverbal elements left out or added in?
    - o Was it easier to express (communicate) your *feelings* vs. *assigning tasks* using one technology compared to the other?

Part Three: Write down the last three times you used a mediated form of communication to communicate while performing job duties. (Note: "mediated forms of communication" are defined as human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices).
- Why did you use a communication technology?

- Would another form of communication been more effective? Channel-rich or channel-lean? Why or why not?
- Would you have changed the message if you had communicated with the person face-to-face? Why or why not?
- Make notes of any other observations you notice (see previous questions in Part Two).

2. Instruct participants to pair up and share their observations of each of the three parts of this activity.

3. Lead a large group discussion in which the partners share their observations and discuss strategies for improving their use of information communication technologies.

[i] Williams-Buenzli, W. (2015). A measure of soft skill gains acquisition with engagement in Baccalaureate nursing programs. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Southern Mississippi, Mississippi.

[ii] Weaver, B., Lindsay, B., & Gitelman, B. (2012). Communication Technology and Social Media: Opportunities and Implications for Healthcare Systems. *Online Journal Of Issues In Nursing*, *17*(3), 1. doi:10.3912/OJIN.Vol17No03Man03

[iii] Jelphs, K. (2006). Communication: Soft skill, hard impact? *Clinician In Management*, *14*(1), 33-37.

[iv] Varpio, L., Schryer, C. F., & Lingard, L. (2009). Routine and adaptive expert strategies for resolving ICT
mediated communication problems in the team setting. *Medical Education*, *43*(7), 680-687. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2923.2009.03395.x

[v] Phillips, C. (2015). Tending to the iPatient: Or how can clinicians balance the electronic age with
good patient care? *Generations*, *39*(1), 78-82.