Techniques to Effective Communication and Patient Satisfaction

All patients want to feel that their healthcare professional cares about them and listens to their concerns. As patients and healthcare professionals become more pressed for time, it becomes essential to make the office visit an efficient, effective, and comfortable information-gathering event. Creating this environment makes everyone's job easier and results in a more satisfying experience for all involved.

Generally, patients reflect on the physician-patient communication that took place during their visit to gauge the overall quality of the encounter. Effective physician-patient communication is two-way and free-flowing. Patients who are satisfied with the physician’s or office staff’s communication style tend to be more satisfied with the medical care received.

By practicing good listening habits and helping educate patients, the physician can create an atmosphere where the art of medicine is equally as important as the science.

Techniques to Promote Effective Communication:
- Practice active listening by paraphrasing your patient’s statements. This helps the patient realize that you understand and are listening to their issues and concerns.
- Do not interrupt the patient; allow them to fully explain concerns and issues.
- Ask open-ended questions that elicit information rather than ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers, i.e., “How are things going?”
- Maintain eye contact with your patient throughout the appointment.
- Make timely follow-up phone calls regarding test results and patient inquiries.
- Be attentive to issues within the office regarding staff-patient interactions.
- Physician and office staff should not verbalize or appear rushed during visit.

Techniques to Increase Patient Satisfaction:
- Acknowledge the patient with an appropriate greeting and through staff interaction.
- Honor appointment times.
- Answer the phone promptly.
- Work out of an accessible office.
- Use easy-to-read signs and forms.

Identifying and implementing opportunities to improve communication and office staff verbal and non-verbal communication helps ensure a successful physician-patient relationship.