

Effective communicating starts with #hellomynameis.

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EBN Opinion

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Effective communicating starts with #hellomynameis

This month's opinion will draw on an EBN twitter chat hosted by Kate Granger a doctor, but also a terminally ill cancer patient, and founder of the #hellomynameis campaign.

Background

International health policy advocates that care and service delivery must be patient-centred and that health professionals must listen and value patients' perspectives, and collaborate with them when planning care and treatments (International Alliance of Patients' Organizations, 2007). Integral to the concept of patient-centred care are the interactions that occur between patients and health professionals. Operating within a model of patient-centred care requires health professionals to elicit patients' perspectives such as identifying their concerns, exploring the impact of illness symptoms on their lives and involving them in care decisions. A shift from a predominately professional dominated approach to interacting with patients to a more patient-centred approach requires health professionals to consider how they communicate with patients. The quality of interactions between patients and health professionals can influence the effectiveness of information exchange, the development of patient-professional relationships, rapport building and the way care is negotiated at each stage of the care pathway (Gordon et al, 2009).

Engaging effectively with patients, and involving them in care and care decisions, requires health professionals to establish rapport with patients, build trust and develop a meaningful therapeutic relationship. Patients are vulnerable; they are ill, often in unfamiliar situations away from the security of their own environment and isolated from friends and family, and may have to discuss sensitive personal issues or undergo uncomfortable and sensitive procedures. In contrast, health professionals are in a position of authority and in a familiar working environment; there is an inevitable power imbalance that is within the professionals' domain to minimise. The way health professionals communicate with patients can have a lasting impact on patients, which begins with introducing themselves to patients. Health professionals in the main have information about the patient in advance of any contact, at a minimum this would be the patients' name, this is not always the case for patients (Granger, 2013). Kate and her husband conceived the #hellomynameis campaign during a five day hospital admission where Kate lost count of the number of times she had to ask staff their names. Three years later the campaign has an international following, reaching the

majority of NHS organisations in the UK, and has gained prominence across many European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, America and some African countries, with over one billion Twitter impressions.

Key messages from the Twitter Chat (#ebnjc)

There was overwhelming support for the #hellomynameis campaign from participants engaging in the Twitter Chat. It was evident that health professionals did not always value the importance of introducing themselves to patients and family members, which could cause uncertainty about who was discussing care with the patient and their role. Overwhelming tweeters perceived that not offering an introduction as to who they were was not only extremely poor manners, but not conducive to a professional role, or developing a therapeutic relationship with the patient. The key message from the Twitter chat was that health professionals introducing themselves to patients is a fundamental core principles of care.
























Where next?

All practitioners should consider whether they always introduce themselves to their patients, and if not ask why. Practical training should be offered to help health professionals develop and use a range of communications strategies and understand the importance of

Extracts from EBN Twitter Club ‘#hellomynameis campaign, access the full story:

<https://storify.com/josmith175/hellomynameis>



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considering how they communicate with patients, using the #hellomynameis campaign as an exemplar. There is much more work to be done with the #hellomynameis campaign: several initial quality improvement projects have highlighted that the campaign can be used a driver to increase the number of times staff introduce themselves to patients.

References

International Alliance of Patients' Organizations (2007) Patient-centre healthcare review 2nd edition. *International Alliance of Patients' Organizations*.

Gordon C, Ellis-Hill C, Ashburn A (2009) The use of conversational analysis: nurse-patient interaction in communication disability after stroke. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65: 544-553.

Granger K (2013) Healthcare staff must properly introduce themselves to patients. *British Medical Journal*, 347: f5833.

Resources

www.hellomynameis.org.uk

NHS Confederation Speech (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hk6TydLCiy4>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-31062042>