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Want Clear & Concise Communication? Eliminate Medical Jargon

Clear and concise communication is a critical element in developing meaningful, effective exchanges between you and your patients. In ideal healthcare interactions, you and your patients should take turns listening and speaking. Of course, not every conversation turns out this way. Several barriers

pose a risk to good communication. Some of these barriers include, but are certainly not limited to:

- The anxiety and intimidation associated with healthcare interactions.
- Stress associated with seeking healthcare services and treatment.
- Cultural and linguistic differences due to a highly diverse patient population.
- Time constraints of a busy healthcare staff.

Indeed, there are numerous obstacles that stand in the way of effective communication. And perhaps one of the biggest barriers (not mentioned above) comes in the form of medical jargon. Medical jargon undoubtedly contributes to poor communication, and is defined as technical terminology that is often obscure and pretentious. Jargon is ultimately a language of familiarity.

Fortunately, we have complete control over when and how often we use jargon in our daily interactions with patients and customers. Here are some simple tips that can help you identify and eliminate jargon from your vocabulary:

- **Avoid abbreviations and acronyms:** Chances are, patients aren't going to understand the vast majority of medical abbreviations and acronyms we use. If you do use abbreviations and acronyms, make sure you explain what it stands for, or ask the patient if they are familiar with the term.
- **Use simple terms in your descriptions and when asking questions.** Remember that simpler is usually always better when it comes to communication. For example, if you're asking a patient where they are experiencing pain, you should stick to terms like "upper and lower body" as opposed to the "upper quadrant and lower quadrant."
- **Don't use a basic description without providing context.** Don't assume that patients understand what you believe to be common knowledge. For example, many healthcare providers will breeze over a test result if it's negative, and simply tell the patient the test was negative. However, many patients may not know exactly what this means. Take the time to explain simple, basic descriptions.
- **Don't assume patients understand terminology that is widely known within your field.** For example, many patients may not know what a "benign mass" is. Again, jargon is a language of familiarity. You use the terms every day, so they are recognizable and easy to understand. Yet, for outsiders, this language is often intimidating and complex.

Remember, avoiding medical jargon is an important way to improve patient and healthcare provider communication. Focus on avoiding medical jargon and the communication barriers mentioned above—they can help improve your communication efforts tremendously.

*"I think we invent jargon because it saves times talking to one-another."
—John M. Smith*

Got Fear? Forget About It!

Scary movies, haunted houses, ghoulish costumes—our sense of fear certainly gets stimulated in the month of October. So, perhaps now is as good as time as any to check our sense of fear when it comes to our healthcare careers. To be sure, the fear of failure is perhaps the strongest force holding us from reaching our potential.

In a world full of uncertainty, it's easy to see why many healthcare employees are hesitant to make a big leap in their professional career. But keep in mind that playing it safe has its risks too. If you never take that leap, your opportunity for success becomes substantially smaller.

The following strategies will help you put risk and reward in perspective so you can overcome the fear of failure.

1. **Consider what your fears are costing you.** People often fail to consider the financial and

professional gains their fears are costing them. It's important to remember that taking advantage of opportunities can lead to great rewards and success.

2. **Do your homework.** It's only natural to fear what we don't know. However, when you don't know what you're dealing with, potential consequences may seem far worse than what they actually are. You can address your fear more effectively if you try to understand it. Research all the potential outcomes (both good and bad) so you genuinely understand the risk of failure and benefits of success.
3. **Realistically consider the worst-case scenario.** If you take a risk and fall flat on your face, what's the worst thing that could realistically happen? How long would it take you to recover? Chances are, the worst-case scenario isn't as bad as you initially feared. So, consider if the reality of the worst-case scenario is enough to keep you in a mediocre situation indefinitely.
4. **Understand that failure has its benefits.** It may sound like a cliché, but we really do learn from our mistakes and failures. So, even if things don't turn out as you intended, take time to reflect on the experience. Each failure is a trial in an experiment and an opportunity for growth.
5. **Take action.** The best way to reduce fear and build confidence is taking action. As soon as you do, you'll begin accumulating experience and knowledge. Everything is hardest the first time. Start off with small steps and build up your confidence until the fear of failure is manageable.

There's no question that everyone deals with fear. It's a part of being human. So, don't feel alone in your feelings of uncertainty. Be comforted in the fact that there are simple strategies to address these feelings, and if you follow them, you can turn your fear into overwhelming success.

*"The greatest barrier to success is the fear of failure."
—Sven Goran Eriksson*

Healthcare Fraud on the Rise for 2011

New statistics released by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) show the rate of federal prosecutions for healthcare fraud during the first eight months of 2011 are up 85 percent over the previous year.

The government has reported 903 healthcare fraud prosecutions so far this year, which is a 24 percent increase over the total for all of 2010 (731 prosecutions).

The results from TRAC show a large spike in the projected number of prosecutions during 2011 as compared to prior years dating back to the President George Bush Sr. administration. Recent government initiatives, such as healthcare reform and Medicare Fraud HEAT Task Force operations, have placed an increased emphasis on cracking down on criminal healthcare activity.

[Learn more about this interesting trend.](#)

You Not-So-Typical Office Slogans

Every workplace seems to have its own personal mantras and mission statements. However, we're hoping you don't find the slogans below at any workplace!

- If you do a good job and work hard, you may get a job with a better company someday.
- The light at the end of the tunnel has been turned off due to budget cuts.
- Sure, you may not like working here, but we pay your rent.
- Rome did not create a great empire by having meetings - they did it by killing all those who opposed them.

- A person who smiles in the face of adversity, probably has a scapegoat.
- Abandon All Hope, Ye Who Enter Here.
- If at first you don't succeed - try management.
- It's only unethical if you get caught.

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