

HUDDLE UP

Tips and Strategies for Improved Communication - Series #4

Do's and Don'ts: Words of Wisdom from the Patient Perspective



From a patient perspective, a professional is caring, empathetic, respectful, competent and trustworthy. How staff display these characteristics determines if patients believe staff are behaving professionally.

Patients have expectations for professional behavior based on their own life experiences, each coming to dialysis with their own health concerns, wants, needs and coping strategies. They look to staff to provide compassionate and empathetic care which recognizes that each patient wants a hassle-free, pain-free experience. Patients do not want to feel like they are part of an assembly line, but are appreciated as individuals. Below is a list of recommended do's and don'ts for staff in the dialysis setting.

DO'S	DON'TS
Be empathetic. Imagine how you would want to be treated if you were sitting in the dialysis chair.	Don't treat patients like you are better than them or are doing them a favor by being their caregiver.
Try to see things from a patient perspective.	Don't focus only on your needs as the provider.
Sit down and talk with patients. Ask how you can help.	Don't assume you know what patients are going through or that they don't have ideas about their own needs.
Be polite and respectful with your words and tone of voice and consider patient privacy.	Don't talk down to patients, talk to them like a child, speak in a negative tone or raise your voice.
Listen to patients and ask questions to better understand what they are feeling and/or need.	Don't interrupt patients or multi-task while patients are trying to talk and explain something to you.
Involve patients in decisions about their care. Engage them in discussions, asking what they want for their care.	Don't tell patients what to do or make decisions for them without including them in the conversation.
Keep a positive attitude. Put your "bad day" on hold when caring for patients.	Don't let a bad attitude or a personal problem negatively affect how you treat patients.
Understand that patients may be afraid. Be respectful of their decisions and concerns and ask how you can help.	Don't take it personally if a patient wants someone else to stick them. Their access is their lifeline and no one wants to feel pain.

DO'S	DON'TS
Be present when you are working with patients and respectful in how you treat them. This is their time today, right now.	Don't go on "auto-pilot" when providing care. Don't rush through what you are doing or be rough with patients.
Treat each patient like a person with a life outside of dialysis with feelings, hopes and dreams.	Don't treat patients as if they were just a number on your list for the day.
Listen to patient concerns and grievances and ask questions.	Don't minimize or brush off patient concerns.
Follow all clinic guidelines for patient safety.	Don't get upset with patients if they ask you to wash your hands, change your gloves or wear your PPE.
Follow through. Do what you say you're going to do.	Don't make promises you cannot keep.
Be mindful that conversations you have with other staff on the treatment floor are only related to care being provided.	Don't talk about personal or work-related problems in front of or with patients.
Stay attentive to patients so you can respond to their needs.	Don't leave your assigned patients unattended.
Do your best to get your patients running on time.	Don't dismiss a patient's time as less valuable than yours.
Help patients when they are done with treatment by folding their blanket or helping with their belongings.	Don't forget that small things make a big difference in showing how much you care.

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