

MD Talking Stations - Communication Skills

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Instructions to Candidate

You are the registrar in the General Medicine ward.

Your patient is Ms. Kanthi Perera, a 48-year-old Assistant Manager of a Supermarket. She was diagnosed with hypertension about 12 years ago and had an anterior ST-elevation myocardial infarction 3 years ago. She is on aspirin, losartan, bisoprolol and atorvastatin but is poorly adherent to therapy. She was admitted to the ward for control of blood pressure of 180/110 mmHg.

The blood pressure now controlled on maximum doses of losartan, amlodipine and HCT and she is feeling well. However, investigations have shown that there is 1.1 g/day of proteinuria and serum creatinine is 1.4 mg/dL with eGFR of 46 mL/min/1.73m². Echocardiogram has shown left ventricular hypertrophy with strain, and an ejection fraction of 45%.

Your task is to explain these findings and encourage Ms Perera to adhere to therapy.

Do not examine the patient.

Examiner's Document

- **Scenario:** Counselling to improve adherence to anti-hypertensive therapy
- **Task:** Explain need for better control of blood pressure, organ complications and prognosis, and need for adherence with medicines and diet. Motivate to adopt a healthy lifestyle

- **Information to be obtained at the start:**

Social history related to hypertension and IHD management – drug and diet compliance, reasons for poor adherence

- **Information to be given to patient:**

Need for good blood pressure control

Target organ damage – kidney, heart (brain and eyes)

Natural history of complications, if blood pressure is not controlled

Management plan – pharmacological and non-pharmacological aspects

Examiner's Document

- **Response to the surrogate's emotional reaction:**

Sensitive but firm. Encourage surrogate to understand the problem and change her behavior

- **Ideas, concerns and expectations to be elicited and addressed:**

Idea: High blood pressure has no symptoms unless its extremely high. That is the danger.

Concerns: Surrogate is worried she will develop a stroke or kidney failure like her mother – both can be prevented if blood pressure is well-controlled

Expectations: wanting the doctor to give tablets and make the kidneys and heart 'get back to normal'- explain the natural history of complications and the need for good blood pressure control to retard progression

- **Management plan and follow up actions:**

Take the given tablets regularly

Come to follow-up clinic regularly

Self-monitoring of blood pressure at home is encouraged

Weight control, regular exercise, low salt diet encouraged

What is tested in the CS Station?

- Can the candidate identify the challenge given in the scenario and develop a plan for the encounter?
 - What is my task?
 - What must I find out from the surrogate?
 - What exactly must I communicate?
 - What other areas must I naturally cover in the encounter?
- Can the candidate conduct the encounter well?
 - Establish a rapport: rapport-building skills
 - Explore the patient's understanding: questioning skills
 - Provide information clearly, appropriately and adequately: answering skills
 - Check for understanding: listening skills, questioning skills
 - Clarify any questions and doubts: answering skills
 - Arrange for follow-up action, if appropriate: negotiating skills

What is tested in the CS Station?

- Does the candidate display empathy and emotional intelligence?
- Is the candidate professionally competent?
 - Rapport-building skills
 - Conducts the interview in a courteous, humane, empathic, confident and fluent manner
- Examiner's questioning
 - To clarify any doubts/unclear areas in what was observed
 - Specifically check for background knowledge on the task
 - Specifically check for how much he/she has understood the patient's perspectives (ICE) and comprehension of the information that was given

CS Station Assesses TRANSMISSION of Information

- **Introduction and explanation (20%)**

Greets patient and puts patient at ease. Explains what (s)he hopes to do. Tone of voice, non-verbal cues. Pauses and paces the interview. Thanks the patient and concludes. Puts the patient at ease.

- **Explores present understanding (40%)**

Explanation in simple language (avoidance or adequate explanation of medical terms/jargon). Checks understanding. (Effective communication of the information.)

- **Explores and addresses patient's/surrogate's concerns adequately (10%)**

- **Professional attitude and empathy (10%)**

- **Demonstrates adequate knowledge of the issues related to the encounter (10%)**

- **Demonstrates good insight into the success, failure, and difficulties in the encounter (10%)**

Marking Scheme

- Highly Unsatisfactory – 0-29
- Clear Fail – 30-39
- Bare Fail – 40-49
- Bare Pass – 50-59
- Clear Pass – 60-69
- Excellent - ≥ 70

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Common Mistakes

- Not reading the scenario
- Not making a plan/DD – use the 5 minutes outside wisely!
- Using jargon
- Lacking emotion and empathy – act if you must!
- Not listening to the patient/surrogate
- Not pacing the interview well
- Not being mindful of the time
- Not really understanding the whole point of the encounter!