**Effective Medical Communication**

**Health communication**

**Health communication may be defined as a communication method and strategy used to inform individuals about health care facts and best practices, with the aim of improving patient health outcomes and enriching personal and community behaviour and public health practices.**

Health communication is a vast and diverse field that includes health education, risk communication, health and policy advocacy, outbreak communication, patient and other vital aspects. Health communication strategies enable doctors and nurses, community health centres, hospitals and hospital administrators, health educators, non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, and other bodies to disseminate information that can positively influence personal health behaviours and choices.

Effective communication-the need of the hour:

Effective communication — both intra hospital and inter hospital — is regarded absolutely important for health care providers to protect their patients, save on costs, and optimize day-to-day operating efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, effective communication is at the core of health professions, be it doctor- patient communication, inter personal communication or communication with the community.

Communication could appropriately be regarded as “a process of sharing information, knowledge, feelings, emotions, and values between two or more individuals”. Hence, we need to understand that communication is characterised by content, process, and perception. Traditionally, the content has been the prime focus in the teaching of various subjects in health professions including medicine and encompasses information, ideas, perceptions or emotions that we share. However, the processes, perceptions and interpretations that are intrinsically linked become vital in meaningful conversations.

**Interpersonal Communication:**

Health communication includes interpersonal communications, such as one-on-one meetings between a health care provider and patient, as well as community-focused communications, such as public meetings or educational events. Health communication also includes mass media communication, enabled through social media, internet, television, and also radio messaging to reach out to larger audiences. Information on various facets including preventative health care, disease prevention and treatment occupy pivotal importance. For hospitals and health care institutions, we need to effectively communicate in ensuring that patients receive proper care.

Communication is a crucial component in all steps of the health care process. Having said that, organizations with strong communication policies could certainly enrich their patients’ health. Health care professionals and institutions need to recognize the importance of communication in health care in order to thrive.

**Communication skills for leaders in health professions education**

Three categories of communication skills are in place for a discerning leader in health professions education. These include verbal, non -verbal and written. On a day to day basis, it becomes imperative for the leader to have a sound and effective knowledge of core communication skills, team communication skills, strategic management communication skills and technology based communication strategies. These aspects have to be necessarily taken cognizance of.

**Telemedicine as an effective mode of medical Communication**:

Health care professionals are increasingly embracing telemedicine, which presently involves using a variety of internet-connected technologies to serve patients remotely. These tools play a significant role in health care communications.

Hospitals and other health care organizations use internal online networks, or intranets, to create more robust, efficient and effective communication processes. This makes patient record sharing and cross-departmental communications relatively easier.

Telemedicine goes even further by allowing patients to receive medical care and advice from the comfort of their own homes. Using state-of-the-art communication tools, patients and health care providers are able to discuss health concerns through video chat, thereby eliminating the need for the patient to visit the hospital, unless it is really warranted. This is economical, besides creating a seamless communication experience for everyone involved.

**Role of Artificial intelligence in health communication:**

With the advent of industrial revolution 4.0, artificial intelligence, internet of things, Robotics and big data management have entered into the portals of health care. Health communication has received a big boost, Artificial intelligence also known as AI, as applied to health professional-patient communication enables efficient audit and feedback.

Scientific advances made in the recent past have increased the ability of AI to encode the complexity in human interaction. AI coding has been shown to be substantially reliable, though more work has to be carried out in this direction. SBV has taken cognizance of the fact and has instituted an exclusive centre for artificial intelligence in health care. It has already created a favourable impact in the arena of health communication.

**Conclusion**: It must be said that no other aspect in medicine has created such a tremendous impact on patient care quality, as communication. In the present era of high end technology and diagnostics, the health professionals have largelyweaned themselves away from the personal touch and to add to the complexity, there is lack of optimal interpersonal skills, a major factor that hampers quality health care delivery. At SBV, we advocate a careful blend of both conservative and contemporary facets of effective medical communication that would go a long way in addressing effective and efficient patient care.

To conclude, Communication skills are of great importance to medical and health professionals. We need to identify the barriers that hamper effective communication. Teaching communication in health sciences higher education institutions is cardinal and the approach to assessment of communication skills is deemed necessary for enhancing the quality and efficiency of medical communication, in particular and health communication, in general.