

Communication is a Clinical Necessity' in Dentistry- A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Effective communication with dental patients is crucial for successful dental rehabilitation, particularly when intricate procedures are involved. Dental care considers a patient's functional, emotional, psychological, and aesthetic needs in addition to their biological and functional needs.

Objective: Structured, compassionate, and transparent communication is the foundation of a patient-centered approach, which enhances treatment acceptance, fosters trust, and aligns clinical goals with patient expectations.

Methods: The literature was reviewed using databases such as PubMed, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Included were research projects from 1975 to 2025 that examined the effectiveness of communication across all dental specialties. Soft Skills, YMATO Factor, Communication, and Doctor-Patient Communication were among the keywords that were included.

Results: Dissatisfaction with dental care is more often caused by unmet expectations and poor communication than by technical issues, according to numerous studies. Tailored communication strategies are essential for promoting compliance, reducing anxiety, and ensuring sustained satisfaction. especially in older patients who might have psychological, sensory, or cognitive issues.

Conclusion: Effective communication is not only a useful tool but also a clinical necessity, and it is crucial to the success of dental therapy.

Keywords: Communication, Soft Skills, YMATO Factor, Patient – Doctor communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The assertion that "communication with the patient – secret to success" from the perspective of dental treatment must be supported by an analysis of the ways in which effective communication influences diagnosis, treatment planning, patient satisfaction, treatment compliance, and overall treatment outcomes. Every discussion a doctor has with a patient is intended to learn about their experience and assist them in becoming healthier. Communication is the foundation for sharing a diagnosis and treatment plan, as well as for collecting medical history. Strong communicators have been shown to improve patient satisfaction, promote adherence to treatment, and reduce the likelihood of malpractice claims. [1,2]

A trustworthy relationship with common goals is necessary for doctor-patient interactions to be advantageous to both parties. Patients are at risk because they are sick and expect to give their doctor personal information. They feel more comfortable because they think the doctor is competent, understanding, and genuinely interested in their well-being. Making affirming

gestures, meeting at eye level, and maintaining eye contact are all crucial components of effective communication with the patient. Speaking slowly and avoiding distractions can help you capture the patient's attention and build rapport in a clinical setting that is otherwise busy and often chaotic.

When you first meet with a patient, it is important to learn what they already know and what they would like to learn. Some patients may prefer to read the original research that served as the foundation for the recommendations, while others may prefer to read general summaries of the disease processes. Furthermore, empathy is a crucial component of communication. Never minimize the emotions or symptoms of a patient. A physician should always act in the patient's best interest, be optimistic, and be truthful when sharing information. Furthermore, admitting when errors have been made or when certain medical evidence is ambiguous is necessary to building a trustworthy doctor-patient relationship. [3]

Humans communicate through gestures, facial expressions, body language, and words. We eventually learn to look beyond verbal communication and recognize nonverbal clues to fully understand how a patient's illness is affecting their life and goals. Learn to draw conclusions about the patient based on their interactions with family members and the objects they own. Speaking and listening are the two components of communication. Acknowledge the patient's hopes and fears. Avoid bringing up your personal bias or adhering to particular stereotypes during the conversation. [2, 3]

While having a wide range of skills is important, a surgeon must also possess another trait to improve patient outcomes through treatment. We employ the "power of communication" when speaking with our patients. Effective communication can make all the difference when it comes to your patients. You can help the patient feel supported, trust your judgment, and follow your advice by doing this. It may even help to improve blood pressure and blood sugar levels, two health indicators. However, the harsh reality is that the clinicians work for a system that invariably entails high workloads, outdated practices, and stressful environments. In such a situation, it can be difficult to give the patient your full attention. Surveys have consistently shown that patients want better communication between themselves and their doctors. [4]

Medical educators and patient advocates have long stressed the importance of communicating with patients and their families during medical encounters, and communication has emerged as a critical physician competency. Everyone agrees that the basics of communication skills relevant to medical encounters should be taught to medical trainees. [5]

2. METHODOLOGY

According to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) criteria, the following keywords were used in an electronic search for publications about patient-prosthodontist communication published between 1975 and 2025: communication, soft skills, YMATO factor, patient-doctor communication, and Medline via PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Wiley Online, EBSCOhost, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. In total, there were sixty-three articles. The current study only included complete English-language papers; the other 49 articles were rejected for a number of reasons, such as duplicates, abstracts, and content on websites. In the end, 14 items were found to be relevant to the current search. [Fig-1]



Fig-1: PRISMA Flow chart -Describing Process of Articles being reviewed and selected

3. RESULTS

A review of the selected literature reveals many significant applications of patient communication in prosthodontics. Effective patient communication will help prosthodontic patients build rapport and trust in addition to assisting with accurate diagnosis and efficient patient management, which enhances outcomes and reduces complaints. Effective communication is both a clinical necessity and a soft skill in prosthodontics. Effective communication with the patient is the key to the success of the clinical work, according to the data that is currently available. The significance of the YMATO factor in prosthodontic patient communication was emphasized in the literature. By employing structured communication tools such as the YMATO factor, clinicians can significantly improve treatment acceptance, compliance, and overall satisfaction.

4. DISCUSSION

Developing rapport and trust: Dental treatment often involves lengthy procedures (many appointments, follow-ups, and adjustments). Establishing trust is crucial for patient cooperation and satisfaction. Patients may experience anxiety or uneasiness during extensive procedures such as full-mouth rehabilitations, implant-supported prostheses, and complete dentures. Effective communication builds trust, builds rapport, and reassures patients. [6] Accuracy Identification and Development of Customized Treatment in the treatment procedures, function, aesthetics, and patient expectations are all matched in addition to mechanical tooth replacement. Understanding a patient's concerns about speech, mastication, appearance, and finances requires careful listening and probing. This enables the prosthodontist to offer customized and useful solutions. The patient's vision of the ideal smile may differ from the dentists. With the right conversation, these visions can be brought into alignment.[7] Unrealistic expectations often lead to dissatisfaction, even in cases where a treatment is technically perfect. Crowns and dentures are examples of prosthodontic devices that are subject to restrictions. A patient who anticipates a "natural teeth feel" from complete dentures might be disappointed if they are not informed beforehand. Communication makes it easier to match expectations with reality. [8] Greater Compliance and Acceptance of Treatment. Patients are more likely to follow treatment recommendations when they feel heard and informed. Giving instructions about denture hygiene, eating habits, adaptation periods, and follow-up appointments requires empathetic and transparent communication. Explaining the importance of post-insertion visits helps patients understand their role in success. [9] Better Results and Fewer Complaints. Rather than poor technical work, poor communication is the primary cause of most prosthodontic complaints. Many medicolegal cases have inadequate informed consent or omission of limitations as their primary cause. Risk is reduced by effective communication. [10] Motivation and psychological comfort. When undergoing extensive prosthodontic work, patients may experience psychological distress. Replacing lost teeth has an impact on identity and self-image. Psychological support and treatment acceptance can both be enhanced by open communication. [11] Collaboration Between the Patient and the Dentist Prosthodontics requires patient cooperation and is not a one-sided procedure. For instance, neuromuscular adaptation is necessary for full denture success and can only happen if the patient wears and uses the prosthesis on a regular basis. [12] In prosthodontics, communication is not merely a soft skill; it is a clinical necessity. From diagnosis to delivery and long-term follow-up, the success of the entire process depends on the clinician's capacity to understand the patient, educate them, control expectations, and encourage compliance. Therefore, the assertion that "Communication with the patient – secret to success" is fully supported from a clinical and psychological perspective. [13]

The drawbacks of Ineffective communication when caring for a patient in Dentistry

When caring for elderly or prosthodontic patients, poor communication can lead to a number of clinical, emotional, and medico-legal problems.

1. An incomplete medical history or an incorrect diagnosis

Elderly patients frequently have complex medical histories (such as diabetes, arthritis, or xerostomia) and cognitive issues (such as dementia). Ineffective communication by a dentist may cause them to miss crucial medical or psychological information, leading to inappropriate or even harmful treatment choices. [14]

2. Unrealistic expectations and patient dissatisfaction

If the dentist does not explain the limitations of prosthodontic treatment (e.g., dentures won't feel like natural teeth), elderly patients may expect perfection. Even well-made prostheses can be rejected by patients, which can lead to treatment failure, frustration, and a decline in trust. [15]

3. Not Adhering to Instructions

Additional advice on follow-up, hygiene, adaptation exercises, and prosthesis maintenance may be necessary for elderly patients. Inadequate or unclear instructions can result in non-adherence, which can cause prosthesis failure, infections (such as denture stomatitis), or sore spots. If a patient is not told to remove their dentures at night, they may develop fungal infections and suffer mucosal damage. [8]

4. Emotional and Psychological Pain

Elderly patients already experience loneliness, depression, and cognitive decline. When a dismissive or unclear communication style makes them feel anxious, disrespected, or neglected, they may stop receiving treatment or experience emotional harm. [11]

5. Trust is lost and the patient's relationship with the dentist deteriorates.

Senior patients may lose faith in the clinician if they don't receive follow-up, active listening, or empathy. Negative word-of-mouth, refusal of treatment, or refusal of payment could follow from this. [8]

6. An Increase in Legal and Ethical Complaints

It's possible that elderly patients or those who look after them feel they were not informed of the risks, available options, or limitations. Inadequate documentation and communication can lead to litigation or complaints to professional boards. [16]

7. Inadequate Long-Term Maintenance and Monitoring

Maintenance is essential in prosthodontics, especially for elderly patients who may need regular implant reviews, relines, or adjustments. If patients do not understand the importance of follow-up, they may present later with severe complications.

Clinical success, patient safety, and legal protection are all directly impacted by poor communication in prosthodontics, especially when working with elderly patients. Even the best-designed prosthesis won't work without understanding, compassion, and guidance.

YMATO Factor as a communication tool with the patient

The YMATO factor is closely linked to patient communication, especially in prosthodontics and geriatric dentistry. It serves as a manual for crucial subjects that a dentist should cover before, during, and after dental treatment.

YMATO stands for: [11,12]

Y – Your problem (Chief complaint)

M – Motivation for treatment

A – Attitude toward treatment

T – Time the patient can commit

O – Outcome expectations

In order to help clinicians identify and treat the patient's behavioral and psychological aspects, YMATO was initially employed as a communication tool in patient-dentist interactions. It ensures that the prosthodontist is aware of the patient's priorities. focuses on potential differences between patient demands and clinical outcomes. Patients are more cooperative during the planning process when they feel heard and involved. Structured tools like YMATO are very helpful because elderly patients may have a reduced capacity for communication. [17-19], [Table-I]

YMATO Element	Role in Communication	Clinical Significance
Your Problem	Understanding the patient's chief complaint, symptoms, and concerns.	Ensures that the treatment is directed to what the patient values most (e.g., esthetics vs function).
Motivation	Identifying why the patient seeks treatment—pain relief, esthetics, social reasons, etc.	Helps customize treatment and predict compliance.
Attitude	Exploring the patient's attitude toward dental care—fear, past experiences, expectations.	Critical in geriatric patients; negative attitudes may require counseling or desensitization.
Time	Determining if the patient can commit to the number and length of appointments.	Crucial in lengthy prosthodontic procedures like full dentures or implant-supported restorations.
Out come	Assessing the patient's expectations regarding function, esthetics, and longevity.	Prevents dissatisfaction and medicolegal issues by aligning outcomes with reality.

Table-I: Explains how YMATO Relates to Communication in Prosthodontics.

The YMATO factor is a systematic approach to patient communication. It helps clinicians understand a patient's personality, expectations, and limitations prior to starting prosthodontic treatment; this is especially useful in geriatric dentistry. It definitely falls under communication with the patient as a helpful bedside guide to ensure patient-centered success. [18]

Numerous studies and scholarly publications support the idea that communication with prosthodontic patients is crucial to the success of treatment. In prosthodontics, communication is crucial, especially for older and complete denture patients. These studies show how communication impacts psychological adaptation, patient satisfaction, compliance, and long-term outcomes. [20]

Dental treatment acceptance rises when the dentist attends to the patient's emotional needs and involves them in the process. Communication between patients fosters cooperation and trust. Patients are more satisfied when they are informed and actively involved, even with technically subpar prostheses. Ineffective communication leads to unrealistic expectations, non-compliance, and dissatisfaction. Elderly patients benefit immensely from structured communication frameworks like YMATO. [19]

5. CONCLUSION

During dental treatment, where therapy often includes both physical rehabilitation and emotional and psychological adaptation, effective communication is crucial. Even a technically perfect procedure may not function as intended if the patient's expectations, concerns, and motivations are not properly identified and addressed. By employing structured communication techniques such as the YMATO factor, empathic dialogue, and active patient involvement, clinicians can significantly improve treatment acceptance, compliance, and overall satisfaction. Particularly for older patients with more severe cognitive, sensory, and emotional challenges, communication becomes not only a supportive but also an essential component of care. Therefore, integrating patient-centered communication into prosthodontic treatment at every stage is the true key to long-term clinical success and patient well-being.

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