

## Communicative Skills Formation for Obstetrics and Gynecology Interns

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**ABSTRACT:** The proposed article highlights the problem of young doctors' communication skills formation. Method for improving communication skills by using training "Communication is the key to successful cooperation between women and doctor" was proposed. Was carried out a review and presented research results of communication skills of interns from department of obstetrics and gynecology postgraduate education before and after training.

**KEYWORDS:** *Communication skills; postgraduate education; interns; obstetrics and gynecology.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Today the availability of communicative knowledge and skills is extremely important for the individual, because it is the key to successful development in social and professional life [1, 8].

Scholars contend that ability to communicate and get along with others is more demand than technical competence for employers, regardless of specialty. The thesis is confirmed in the theory of management, according to which all skills are divided into two large groups: hard skills and soft skills. Hard skills are professional-technical attainments. It's including manual manipulations, awareness of the latest treatment standards, attendance at conferences etc. Demonstrations of soft skills are impossible. This group includes communicative management skills, such as teamwork, listening and understanding of the patient, oratory, conflict resolution. According to research papers, hard skills make up 15 % of the professional success of the employee, and soft skills determine the other 85 % [2, 3, 4].

It stands to mention, that the presented results cannot be fully interpreted in relation to doctors, because possession of practical skills is a imperative part of the professional competence of a health worker. At the same time, the ability to communicate correctly with people is a component of the specialist's success [1, 5].

Scientists have found that empathy, reflection, flexibility, focus on open communication, the ability to quickly establish contact, social courage, resilience, ability to prevent and resolve conflicts are integral parts of the professional competence of a health worker. In the mentioned scientific works the correlation between the presence of soft components of professional competence was highlighted, which, in our opinion, can be conditionally defined as "communicative competencies", and the subsequent effectiveness of communication between the physician and the patient: will achieve to understanding, mutual trust, sympathy [1, 3, 7].

Consequently, communicative competence of doctors' are provided by such skills as: establishing contact with the patient, maintaining a conversation, persuasion, accessible presentation of professional information, taking into account the audience, effective implementation of verbal and non-verbal methods [1, 6].

Taking into account the above, it becomes necessary to study and improve the ways of forming communicative competence among future doctors, in particular at the postgraduate education stage, as one that is directly aimed at ensuring the practical readiness of doctors for independent medical practice.

The purpose of our research was to explore the communicative skills formation level among interns in obstetrics and gynecology, for the purpose of further improvement.

Research methods: questionnaires, interviews, expert evaluation. The research was conducted in the clinical base of the department of obstetrics and gynecology postgraduate education, located in the Kiev city maternity hospital No. 5.

Research was conducted within the framework of the program, initiated by the department of obstetrics and gynecology of postgraduate education of Bogomolets' National Medical University "Communication is the key to successful cooperation between women and doctor". The duration of training was 6 hours. Program consisted of three phases:

1. Assessment of communicative competence of interns without special train during the initial examination of the patient.
2. Conducting training for interns "Communication is the key to successful cooperation between women and doctor".
3. Assessment of communicative competence of interns, after training.

The research involved 52 intern doctors and 104 patients. Women were randomized to 2 groups, which satisfy the requirements for homogeneity of the sample of 52 women in each group. The patients of both groups were from 21 to 31 years, with higher education, without extragenital diseases, were in the department of the pathology of pregnancy in order to monitor the course of normal pregnancy, all were in marriages. In the first group, were women interviewed before interns have been attending training, the second group – women have been interviewing after interns attended training.

Passing the entrance questionnaire interns had to evaluate their own communication skills, by using our original questionnaire that consist of 15 closed-ended questions (Table 1). Answers to questions were presented in the form of a 5-point scale; respondents had to evaluate their own skills by rating them from 0 to 5 points. The maximum total score was 75 (100 %), the minimum was 0.

**Table 1 : Questionnaire for estimation of interns' communicative skills**

No.	Question	Your score
1.	Evaluate your communicative skills	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.	Have patients been satisfied after communication with you?	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.	Have you found quickly understanding with the patient?	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.	Assess your ability to adapt to communication with women of different social and educational levels	0 1 2 3 4 5
5.	Have you sympathized with the patients?	0 1 2 3 4 5
6.	Have you tried to imagine yourself in the patient's place?	0 1 2 3 4 5
7.	Have you provided patients with detailed information about her illness / treatment?	0 1 2 3 4 5
8.	Have you had any difficulties in explaining to patients the necessary information?	0 1 2 3 4 5
9.	Could you persuade the patient to change her decision about illness / treatment?	0 1 2 3 4 5
10.	Is it easy for you to get acquainted with the relatives of the patient?	0 1 2 3 4 5
11.	Have you felt confident when working with a patient?	0 1 2 3 4 5
12.	Have information provided by you been understandable to patients?	0 1 2 3 4 5
13.	Have you checked that information provided by you was understandable to patient?	0 1 2 3 4 5
14.	Have you asked the patient to repeat the basic information provided by you?	0 1 2 3 4 5
15.	Have you used non-verbal communication to establish a trusting and friendly atmosphere while in a process of communicating?	0 1 2 3 4 5

According to the results of the survey, we found that the average indicator of interns' own communicative skills is 48 points (64 %  $\pm$  8,2 %). The maximum score of 75 points was set by 5 (9,6 %  $\pm$  4,0 %) interviewed interns. While the overall result ranges from 0 to 10 points was set at 8 (15,4 %  $\pm$  3,3 %) respondents.

Also, at the first stage, women who had initial medical examination by interns, were proposed to answer to 5 questions, the purpose of which was to assess skills of young doctors effective communication. Benchmarks also been selected point scale - from 0 to 5 (Table 2). The maximum total score was 25 (100 %), the minimum 0.

**Table 2 : Questionnaire for patients to assess the communication skills of interns**

No.	Question	Your score
1.	Have you been satisfied converse to your doctor?	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.	Have you found understanding with your doctor quickly?	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.	Have you been satisfied with the appearance of a doctor (cleanliness, behavior, etc.)?	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.	Have you had credibility after communicating with your doctor?	0 1 2 3 4 5
5.	Have you understood the physician's explanation of your condition?	0 1 2 3 4 5

The average score of interns evaluated by patients was 14 points ( $56\% \pm 8,5\%$ ). The maximum score of 25 point had 5 interns ( $9,6\% \pm 4,0\%$ ), and 3 interns got from 0 to 5 points ( $5,7\% \pm 4,4\%$ ).

Also, in the first stage, to assess interns' communicative skills formation, we have applied an expert assessment method. As experts, we have engaged interns' curators. The interns' curators are doctors' obstetricians-gynecologists with more than 10 years of experience in the specialty. Experts evaluated the communicative skills of interns during their communication with patients. To standardize the evaluation, we used a check list (Table 3) based on the ComOnCheck scale, which was developed by a group of German scientists (K. Radzieja, J. Loechnerb, C. Engerer et al., 2017) and used to assess communicative skills doctors while preparing an objective structured clinical examination [3].

The developed check list consist of 12 questions. The maximum total score was 60 (100 %), the minimum.

**Table 3 : Questionnaire for experts to assess the communication skills of interns**

No.	Question	Your score
1.	Has the intern behavior been polite?	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.	Has the intern communication been correctly?	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.	Has the conversation been consistent?	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.	Has the intern explained to the patient about his condition / disease / methods of treatment / manipulation in details?	0 1 2 3 4 5
5.	Has the intern paid attention to the patient mood during communication?	0 1 2 3 4 5
6.	Has the intern expressed sympathy to the patient?	0 1 2 3 4 5
7.	Has the physician's appearance been appropriate?	0 1 2 3 4 5
8.	Has body language applied during communication been correct?	0 1 2 3 4 5
9.	Has the patient been able to ask a question?	0 1 2 3 4 5
10.	Has the intern responded to a question asked by the patient?	0 1 2 3 4 5
11.	Has the intern and patient achieved rapport?	0 1 2 3 4 5
12.	Has the patient understood information about condition / follow-up treatment / manipulation that will be performed?	0 1 2 3 4 5

The average interns' score of the was 33 points ( $55\% \pm 8,5\%$ ). The highest score of 60 points was not received any intern, 6 interns had ( $11,5\% \pm 3,8\%$ ) from 0 to 12 points.

As noted earlier, the next phase of program implementation was training delivery " Communication is the key to successful cooperation between women and doctor ". It was held in the format of training, during which interns explained the basic principles of communicative skills. After lectures, interns worked in small groups of 3 people, who alternated with roles: a patient, a doctor, a relative of a patient. Interns had to play scenario that simulative communication with the patient: to explain her state of health, to support, to persuade adherence to treatment and to explain the situation to relatives. Average number of enrolled scenarios per 1 intern was equal 3,5. After passing the simulation scenario, the results of work were analyzed by the participants by themselves, by colleagues, and also by the teacher using the method of positive criticism.

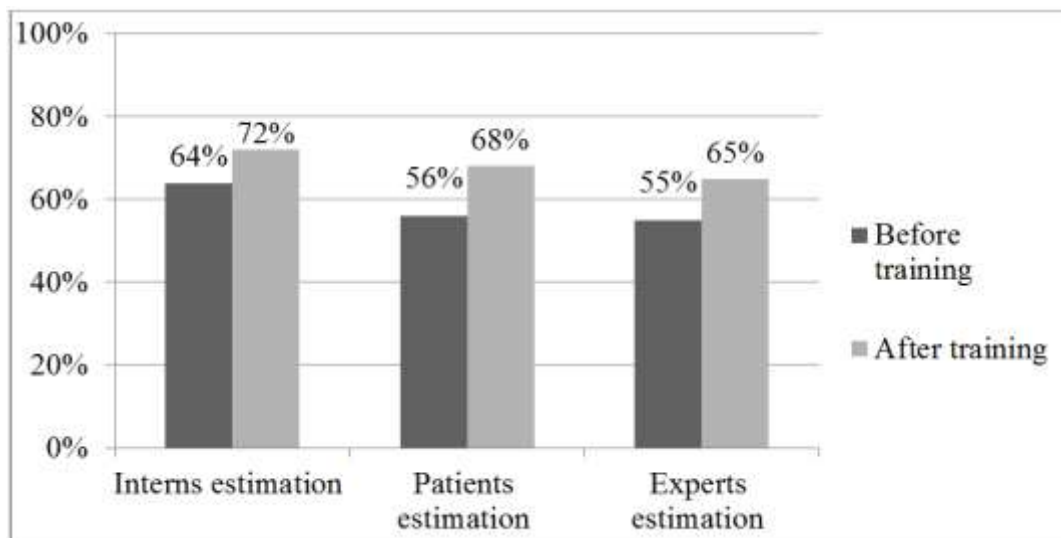
In the third stage of the study, after interns have attended training, we re-test their communication skills (according to the questionnaires presented in tables 1, 2 and 3) and the following data were obtained: the average score of interns own activity has grown by  $12,5\% (\pm 3,8\%)$  and averaged 54 points ( $72\% \pm 7,6\%$ ) the average score of self-employed internship work has grown by  $12,5\% (\pm 7,6\%)$  and averaged 54 points ( $72\% \pm 7,6\%$ ). The maximum score of 75 points had 2 interns ( $3,8\% \pm 4,6\%$ ), and from 0 to 15 points - 3 interns ( $\pm 4,4\%$ ).

The results of women interviews from the second group show that the average result of the communicative competence of interns increased by  $21,4\%$  and averaged 17 points ( $68\% \pm 8,0\%$ ). The grade of 25 points had 8 interns ( $15,4\% \pm 3,3\%$ ), and 0 to 5 points had 1 intern ( $2\% \pm 2,4\%$ ).

The average expert assessment after the training increased by  $18,1\%$  and averaged 39 points ( $65\% \pm 8,1\%$ ). The score of 60 points had 1 intern ( $2\% \pm 2,4\%$ ), and from 0 to 12 points had 2 interns ( $3,8\% \pm 4,6\%$ ).

Overall, we see that the number of interns who were confident in their ability to provide effective communication has decreased, while the results of peer review and patient surveys confirm the feasibility of specialized communicative training for interns in the field of obstetrics and gynecology implementation.

Summarized results of the assessment of communication skills training for the interns and after we presented in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Results of interns' communicative skills evaluation before and after training**

## II. CONCLUSIONS

Communicative skills are an integral part of the professional competence of the physician. It requires the purposeful formation and improvement at all stages of medical education, in particular during the initial specialization in internship which is aimed to forming the ability to independently qualified professional activity. Conducting educational trainings on mastering communication skills between doctor and patient increases the level of confidence of young doctors in their own right and patient satisfaction with the medical services provided, increases the effectiveness of treatment through positive psychosomatic effects, and thus contributes to the strengthening and preservation of the health of the population of our state.

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