HCS 281e: HIT Professional Communication

In this course, you will develop customer service skills to communicate effectively across a team. You will also be introduced to roles that will be encountered in healthcare and public health settings.

≡ **HIT Professional Communication**

≡ **Flashcards**

[?] **Practice Quiz**

HIT Professional Communication

Effective communication is essential to the success of health information technology (HIT) professionals as members of the healthcare team in their supporting roles and with their assigned tasks. Professional communication supports effective teamwork and therefore, in healthcare, supports patient safety and positive patient outcomes. HIT professionals support many different types of customers, so knowing the customers' roles enhances effective communication.

Effective communication has a number of characteristics:

- The intended message is delivered and understood.

- It invites instant verbal and nonverbal feedback.

- It is always professional in tone and language.

- It increases the HIT professional's credibility.

Image credit: Articulate Content Library, used with permission.

Image Alt–tag: Meeting at a table and folks shaking hands.

A speaker's even tone and calm manner enable recipients to hear what is being said and encourage their feedback.

Ineffective communication has negative consequences:

- The intended message is often lost or misunderstood.

- The result is one-way communication.

- Unprofessional, emotionally based, insensitive, or intimidating communication damages the HIT professional's credibility.

- Unprofessional, emotionally based, insensitive, or intimidating communications may negatively affect the healthcare organization (HCO)'s reputation.

An angry tone is likely to alarm listeners, and the message may be misheard or misunderstood.

Communication and Healthcare Recipients

Many healthcare professionals and teams provide patient care in an HCO such as a hospital, clinic, physician practice, or allied health organization. To offer excellent service, support, and communications, HIT professionals should be familiar with the roles and responsibilities of personnel in an HCO:

- Physicians—the key HIT customers

- Nurses—3 million in the United States and all of them dedicated to their patients' healthcare

- Allied health professionals—important providers of diagnostic and therapeutic services

- Administrators and staff — critical support for clinicians' efforts

- Regulatory agencies — the entities that license and audit HCOs as well as third-party insurers

- Patients — the focus of all healthcare efforts

- The public — healthcare consumers

Professional behavior does not end with working hours. The general public's perceptions of the healthcare system are influenced by many factors. HIT professionals must remember that they and the HCO they represent are judged on the basis of the their behavior away from the workplace. If an HIT professional complains about healthcare or the workplace, those who hear the complaints could lose confidence in the healthcare system. They, in turn, can influence family, friends, and neighbors to avoid needed healthcare — with potentially serious consequences.

Social media is a particularly bad venue for negative comments about healthcare or the healthcare workplace. Inappropriate posts can lead to disciplinary action if deemed serious enough by the HIT professional's employer.

HIT professionals should address their own displeasure with aspects of healthcare by joining a professional organization that targets improvements to healthcare or the HIT environment.

Knowledge Check

When HIT professionals communicate with customers, their tone of voice and body language affect the customers' perception. HIT professionals may resolve the issues, but tone and

attitude will influence the customers' sense of good or bad customer service.

Consider each of the following situations from the customer's perception and respond with your impression of what has been communicated.

| SITUATION 1 | SITUATION 2 | SITUATION 3 |

Video credit: © Apples Eyes Studio/Shutterstock.com, used with permission.

| SITUATION 1 | SITUATION 2 | SITUATION 3 |

Video Credit: © Monkey Business Images/Shutterstock.com, used with permission.

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Which of the situations above is the best response?

Situation 1

Situation 2

Situation 3

Communication Methods

Face to Face

Proximity during a conversation, body language, posture, eye contact, concentration, vocal tone, and choice of words all affect face-to-face communications. Healthcare professionals vary in age, nationality, religion, and culture. Jokes and personal sharing, such as family history or personal problems, may seem inappropriate to someone from another culture.

Image credit: Articulate Content Library, used with permission.
Image Alt–tag: Top view of a group of people sitting around a table working.

Electronic

Electronic communications should be constructed with clear and concise language; have content focused on the purpose; contain no jokes or personal information; begin with greetings to the recipients; and end with the sender's name, title, and contact information.

HIT professionals may be asked to deliver highly structured data and reports containing patient care statistics, quality measures, and/or billing information, which must be addressed thoroughly, professionally, and in a timely manner. These reports require strong and effective writing skills.

Social media ensures electronic communications are forever. Caution in the use of social media cannot be overemphasized.

Image credit: Articulate Content Library, used with permission.
Image Alt–tag: Someone typing on a laptop with a book, phone, and paper in front of them.

Telephone

Telephone communication blends the important points of face-to-face and electronic communications. Vocal tone must be professional, language must be clear and concise, and jokes and personal information should not be shared. Voice mail messages should be brief and spoken slowly and clearly, and callers should identify themselves and leave contact information.

Image credit: Articulate Content Library, used with permission.
Image Alt–tag: Someone holding a cell phone.

Communication Considerations

Humor can be an effective way to diffuse a situation but must be used with caution. Humor should be about situations, never about people. Mild, self-deprecating humor can sometimes diffuse tense situations but can also be taken out of context. If in doubt, do not use humor.

Diversity and culture-influenced communication can be challenging. HIT professionals should expect cultural diversity rather than cultural similarity and should modify communication to fit the cultural norms of recipients to establish and reflect respect.
Healthcare includes people with differing physical and communication abilities. It is important and necessary to treat people with disabilities with the same level of respect as anyone else. It is essential to ensure comfortable and effective interactions with customers and colleagues who have different challenges.

Image credit: Articulate Content Library, used with permission.
Image Alt–tag: Someone sitting in a wheel chair.

Communication with a Person with Physical Challenges

Demeanor should be respectful toward all colleagues and customers, including those who use mobility aids or who have physical challenges:

- The greeting should be by shaking what the person offers: hand, prosthesis, or elbow.

- After the greeting, communication should be at eye level; for example, it is appropriate to sit down so that a person using a wheelchair can easily make eye contact.

- Disabled persons who need assistance will ask for it.

Communication with a Person with a Hearing Impairment

- Speakers should make sure they have the attention of the listener before they begin speaking.

- Speakers should keep their face out of the shadow and their mouth visible.

- If a person has an interpreter, speakers should look at and talk to the person, not to the person's interpreter.

- Speakers should speak in a normal tone of voice.

Communication with a Person with a Speech Impairment

- Listeners should not pretend to understand but should ask the person to repeat if necessary.

- Give enough response time for others to communicate. A person who stutters or has slowed speech may need more time to communicate effectively. If a person uses augmentative or alternative communication, such as a picture board or a device that produces voice output, give him or her time to use the communication aid.

Knowledge Check

Using humor and sharing personal information are great ways to cross a cultural divide in communication with customers and colleagues.

True

False

Which of the following is an appropriate consideration for communicating with a customer or colleague who uses a mobile aid?

Always shake hands

Ask whether the personneeds assistance

Establish full-face communication at eye level

HIT Communications

An exchange starts with a sender, a message, and a receiver. The receiver's feedback and the sender's subsequent response create the communication. The hope is that each participant comes away with the same understanding. This model, depicted in the following image, assumes both parties speak the same language.

Image Alt–tag: A diagram showing the basic communication process using two people as an example communicating about HIT.

Communication is a challenge of the human condition. Compounding the challenges are the personal, professional, technical, and scientific nature of healthcare.

Clinical healthcare communication is a recognized and studied challenge:

The *therapeutic model* addresses the important role of relationships in assisting clients and patients with an overall goal of moving away from illness and toward health. This

communication often occurs between clinician and patient. It serves to increase the clinician's understanding of the patient's perspective of the illness and helps the patient cope.

The *King interaction model* is related to the communication process between nurses and patients. This model incorporates dimensions of relationship, process, and transaction identified as crucial elements in the successful communication process.

There is no oficial HIT professional communication model.

The US Department of Health and Human Services's Healthy People 2010 program included Goal 11, Health Communication—"Use of communication strategically to improve health." [1] The goals of Healthy People 2020 focus primarily on health and health equity, but health communication strategies and health IT are identified as vital to achieving those goals.[2]

Healthy People 2010 also outlined healthcare communication barriers, which apply to HIT communications with minor adaptations:

- Literacy level of the target audience should be considered, and low-literacy recipients should be encouraged to use health resources. [3]

- The computer divide is still a reality in many rural and economically challenged settings. Efforts are needed to reach these recipients. [3]

- The Internet has a lot of health and HIT content, but much of it is potentially harmful, inaccurate, inferior, and inappropriate. Site owners must adhere to a strict code of conduct, disclose sources and contact information, explicitly state site intent, explain how personal information is used, and document update frequency. [1]

- Health workers are sometimes challenged to transmit vital health information to patients because of cultural differences or provider-to-patient ratio. [3]

HIT Communication Challenges

There is no one specific HIT communication model to address all situations, so HIT professionals must adapt their style to suit the situation.

Projects bring change, and HIT professionals should expect colleagues, particularly customers, to periodically express frustration or resistance. The HIT professional's ability to communicate is critical to successful change management.

On occasion, customers will seek change that is currently out of reach because of budgetary or technology limitations. HIT professionals must be prepared to explain those limitations and offer realistic future possibilities.

Human Factors in HIT Communication

Communication is often affected by the subtle and sometimes emotional nature of human interaction. Knowledge of these subtleties can have a positive influence on HIT professionals' relationships with colleagues and customers.

Empathy

Empathy is not sympathy or pity. Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person's feelings. Empathy brings accuracy to communication and establishes strong interpersonal relationships essential to productive rapport, particularly with clinicians. It builds trust and overcomes stressful situations that might otherwise result in antagonistic relationships.

EXAMPLE: Empathy in Action

An HIT professional is working with a group of nurses to implement a new tracking system for the emergency department at AC Hospital. Several nurses have difficulty comprehending the meaning of the action item icons.

An empathetic HIT professional would acknowledge that nurses face a lot of complexity, suggest the nurses identify the actions they perform most often, then redirect the focus of training to the common action icons. This approach allows the nurses to achieve some mastery before moving on to the less common icons.

Gaining Insight

To spark creativity, feed your brain material like you're cramming for a tough test. Then stop thinking about the problem you want to solve. Go surfing or take a leisurely walk. Research shows that letting your mind wander fosters creativity.

It's also found that meditation helps you spot and solve problems in creative ways. It promotes divergent thinking that gets novel ideas flowing. According to these studies, meditation also makes you more open to considering new solutions. Time to breathe.

Control

Each project participant, particularly the highly intelligent professionals in healthcare, wants to influence events. By promoting collaboration, HIT professionals provide them with a sense of control to minimize their sense of powerlessness. Doing so promotes project success by fostering customer ownership of the system.

EXAMPLE: Physician Control
While training physicians for the AC Hospital EHR implementation, the HIT professional asks the physicians to choose between options that address a workflow issue or that address a system issue. Having choices provides physicians a sense of ownership and control of the solution and greatly contributes to the probability of a successful implementation.

Trust

Trust is a central variable in human communication. Trust is confidence in others. Clinicians and healthcare administrators will avoid an individual they distrust, sabotage that person's initiatives, or demand a replacement. Trust creates a supportive climate that reduces these negative reactions.

Trust must be earned. Actions inspire trust. HIT professionals must project technological competence and collaboration at all times and in all efforts.

EXAMPLE: Customer Trust
Two days before the first version of the EHR CPOE application was to be installed, Dr. Wong identified an order type that was missing. John, the HIT implementation specialist, asked the vendor and was told that the function would not be available until the next release. John made an entry in the issues log and promised Dr. Wong he would follow up with the next release.

Three month later, when the new release was installed in the test system, John checked and the function was now available. He asked Dr. Wong to test it.

Dr. Wong had gotten used to the workaround and was very impressed that John had followed up as promised. John's efforts greatly enhanced Dr. Wong's trust in John and in HIT customer service.

Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is a process by which an individual communicates personal information, thoughts, or personal feelings to others. Self-disclosure by patients is an important element of a successful doctor–patient relationship, and what is shared constitutes protected health information (PHI) under HIPAA.

HIT professionals should share PHI only in accordance with HIPAA regulations and the HCO's policies. Inappropriate sharing can result in termination and heavy fines.

EXAMPLE: HIT and PHI
Stacy is an HIT professional at Arural Hospital. Her uncle Roger was admitted for treatment in early August. Stacy's cousin Tessa, Roger's daughter, was upset that the nurses and doctor refused to give her information about her father's condition. She called Stacy and asked her to look up his records.

Stacy empathized with Tessa and how frustrating it can be for a family member during a loved one's illness. She also gently explained that HIPAA does not allow her, the nurses, or the physicians to access or share any personal health information (PHI) with an unauthorized person, even a close relative.

Stacy offered to meet Tessa and pursue the possibility that Roger would authorize Tessa's access to his medical details.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a way of sharing acknowledgment and acceptance of others. Both verbal and nonverbal confirmation during conversation can reduce ambiguity and result in more effective communication.

EXAMPLE: Conﬁrming Understanding
A nod of the head provides a nonverbal confirmation that a listener heard what was said.

Repeating what the other person said, such as "My understanding is that you do not like the user interface in that system," provides a verbal confirmation.

A written recap of decisions and tasks after a meeting or conversation, if shared with participants, confirms understanding between parties and allows correction of misunderstandings.

References/Sources

[1] US Department of Health and Human Services (2000). Healthy People 2010:

Understanding and Improving Health. US Government Printing Ofice. Washington, DC.

Edition 2nd. www.healthequityks.org/download/Hllthy_People_2010_Improving_Health.pdf

[2] US Department of Health and Human ServicesHealthy People 2020: Health

Communication and Health Information Technology..

www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=18

[3] Boyd, B. L., and Shaw, W. D. (1995). Unlocking Health Worker Potential: Some Creative Strategies from the Field. Academy for Educational Development. Washington, DC.

Continue with other activities/quizzes...

Flashcards

| Empathy | Understanding brings accuracy to communication and creates strong interpersonal relationships essential to productive rapport, particularly with clinicians. |

1 of 9

| Trust | Inspiring confidence in others creates a supportive climate and reduces negative reactions. |

Control

Collaboration minimizes a customer's sense of powerlessness and promotes project success as customers take ownership of the system.

Confirmation

Acknowledging interactions with others by way of verbal and nonverbal communications reduces ambiguity.

| Self-disclosure | A process by which an individual communicates personal information, thoughts, or personal feelings to others. |

| Therapeutic Model | Addresses the important role of relationships in assisting clients and patients with an overall goal of moving away from illness and toward health. |

| King Interaction Model | Related to the communication process between nurses and |

patients.

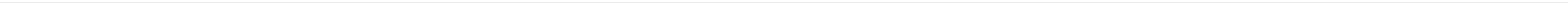Communication Methods

Face to face, electronic, and telephone.

Front of card

Back of card

Practice Quiz

Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of effective communication?

The intended message is delivered and understood.

It is always professional in tone and language.

It increases the HIT professional's credibility.

The result is one-way communication.

Which of the following is a characteristic of effective communication?

It invites instant verbal and nonverbal feedback.

direct communication that is not positive.

Unprofessional communication damages the HIT professional's credibility.

Intimidating communications may negatively affect the healthcare organization (HCO)'s reputation.

A message is understood by the recipients is a reason that good communication skills lead to success for the HIT professional.

True

False

Emotional response makes the message clearer is a reason that good communication skills lead to success for the HIT professional.

True

False

Establishes professional as a credible communicator is a reason that good communication skills lead to success for the HIT professional.

True

False

Encourages teamwork is a reason that good communication skills lead to success for the HIT professional.

True

False

Posture and facial expression of the communicator are most important when the HIT professional uses what method of communication?

Face to face

Electronic

Telephone

Using humor and sharing personal information are great ways to cross a cultural divide in communication with customers and colleagues.

True

False

Which of the following is an appropriate consideration for communicating with a customer or colleague who uses a mobile aid?

Always shake hands.

Ask whether the person needs assistance.

Establish full-face communication at eye level.

Which of the following is an appropriate consideration for communicating with a customer or colleague who has a hearing impairment?

Speak to the person's interpret

Establish full-face communication

Speak loudly

The literacy level of the recipients must be considered when forming a communication is a guideline provided by the federal Healthy People programs applicable to the HIT professional's communications with customers.

True

False

The computer divide that affects rural and economically challenged persons must be considered when forming a communication is a guideline provided by the federal Healthy People programs applicable to the HIT professional's communications with customers.

True

False

Customer resistance to change must be addressed and overcome with effective communication is a guideline provided by the federal Healthy People programs applicable to the HIT professional's communications with customers.

True

False

Internet communications must be kept accurate and up to date is a guideline provided by the federal Healthy People programs applicable to the HIT professional's communications with customers.

True

False

Understanding brings accuracy to communication and creates strong interpersonal relationships essential to productive rapport, particularly with clinicians.

Empathy

Control

Confirmation

Trust

Inspiring confidence in others creates a supportive climate and reduces negative reactions.

Empathy

Trust

Confirmation

Control

Collaboration minimizes a customer's sense of powerlessness and promotes project success as customers take ownership of the system.

Empathy

Trust

Confidence

Control

Acknowledging interactions with others by way of verbal and nonverbal communications reduces ambiguity.

Empathy

Trust

Confidence

Control

A process by which an individual communicates personal information, thoughts, or personal feelings to others.

Empathy

Trust

Self-disclosure

Confidence

Addresses the important role of relationships in assisting clients and patients with an overall goal of moving away from illness and toward health.

Therapeutic model

King interaction model

Empathy model

Confidence model