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Communication skills are a cornerstone of being a professional. Adept communication skills are needed to conduct oneself professionally, develop rapport and maintain productive interpersonal relationships, and to embody the standards of professionalism. Within the field of medicine, communication has been associated with increased patient satisfaction, improved adherence to treatment plans, better health outcomes, and more appropriate clinical decisions. While poor skills, are strongly correlated with subsequent discliplinary action by the state medical boards. (*JAMA 2007;298(9):1057, NEJM 2005;353(25):2673-2682.*)

Within the remediation course, which I created and direct, a method was developed by myself, Kirsten Broadfoot, PhD, and Eva Aagaard, MD, to address the needs of learners with identified deficits in communication. These deficits often include the inability to recognize and understand social cues, perspective taking, empathize, effectively listen and gather information, manage emotions, have situational awareness and appreciate relational dimensions of groups of people that work together. Because many of these communication patterns were learned earlier in life, the method for remediation involves unlearning less adaptive patterns and relearning effective communication skills.

Once identified, a comprehensive assessment is completed to further characterize the learner's struggles and to understand the greater context that resulted in and triggered various behaviors. The learner then engages in a 4 hour individualized training session at the Center for Advancing Professional Excellence simulation lab with actors and high fidelity mannequins. During the training session, each learner participates in 2-3 video recorded scenarios similar to those that have invoked suboptimal behavior in the past and an additional scenario where the learner provides feedback to an actor with similar communicative challenges. After each scenario, the learner watches the video recording with a communication expert and remediation specialist to reflect on their performance, receive feedback and select goals and strategies for subsequent scenarios and real life. A written report with general and case specific recommendations are provided to the learner and referring program or course director.

For the project, I propose studying the 6 month and one-year outcomes of learners who have participated in communication skills training. Outcome would include objective and subjective measures, using qualitative and quantitative methods by participating individuals and their referring program or course directors. In addition to better understanding the utility of the training and contributing to the body of medical and communication literature, I would like to use this data to support future grant applications to support the use of simulation in remedial teaching.

Groups audience:
President's Teaching Scholars Program

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