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Interviewing and Counseling

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**1. What reflections do you have on what you learned or what you now think about the experience of being a patient after watching the movie?**

Something I picked up from “The Doctor” that I haven’t paid much attention to in

real-life clinical experiences is how invasive even the simplest medical procedures can feel for patients when processes are not properly explained beforehand. In the movie there were a few scenes where some doctors did not explain the details of how certain things were going to be done to their patients; this led to the patient feeling very uncomfortable. For example, when Dr. McKee first saw Dr. Abbott, the ENT specialist, he seemed to feel very startled and uncomfortable as Dr. Abbott was aggressively opening his mouth and using a scope to look at his throat. This was because Dr. Abbott did not give any proper explanation of what was going to be done, as she did not make sure that her patient felt comfortable before starting. This was also seen when Dr. McKee was frustrated and angrily shouting questions at the imaging technicians as the mask of his head was being made without anything being explained to him prior to starting. The scenes in this movie really opened my eyes to how vulnerable patients may feel, and it made me realize the importance of making sure that my future patients understand what is going to be done to them before going forward. As “routine” as doing a certain procedure may be for the clinician, he/she should realize that this may be the first time a patient is experiencing this. With this in mind, I reflect back to my experiences as a scribe in an Emergency Department. I can recall several instances where patients were less frightened and more comfortable after the clinicians calmly, slowly, and appropriately explained how a certain procedure, such as a lumbar puncture, would be done before doing it.

**2. Please note specific examples of how physicians treated patients in the movie (how the main character, Dr. Jack McKee was treated and how he treated other patients) – in light of what you now know about patient communication.**

One of the first of Dr. McKee’s patients introduced in the movie was a married woman who had recently had a thoracotomy and was returning for re-evaluation of her wound. She expressed concern over the appearance of her scar and how her husband would feel about it. Instead of using a patient-centered approach by asking the patient to elaborate on how she is feeling about her insecurities surrounding her chest, Dr. McKee insensitively brushed it off by inappropriately saying “tell your husband you look like a playboy centerfold and you have the staples to prove it.” In this case, he did not put any effort into explaining to his patient how the scar will heal or making sure that she understood the changes that have happened to her body. In this same scene, he also rudely removed her gown during examination without initially making sure that the patient felt comfortable with being undressed. In a patient-centered interaction, one of the most important things to do prior to the encounter is to make sure your patient feels comfortable. Interestingly, we saw later in the movie that Dr. McKee did not appreciate being treated in this manner, specifically when the hospital staff’s behavior was inconsistent with patient-centered communication. This is noted when Dr. McKee is laying on his stretcher with just his hospital gown and boxers on, and the staff member suddenly moved the curtains and exposed him. Dr. McKee was uncomfortable, startled, and offended. In a patient-centered environment, the staff member may have notified the patient (Dr. McKee) that she was going to move the curtains and enter the space, ensuring that her patient feels comfortable in the environment.

Dr. Bloomfield was a doctor in the movie whose communication style was actually more patient-centered. He explained to his patients every step of the surgery before/as he is doing it on patients under general anesthesia. He was more compassionate, and his practices were more consistent with patient-centered style because he wanted his patients to be aware of the plan in a detailed way, ensuring that they feel comfortable.

Dr. Abbott’s way of practice was very inconsistent with patient-centered communication. She was very clinician-centered in that she did not take her patients’ preferences/desires into consideration. This was seen when Dr. McKee expressed that he felt uncomfortable with having an afternoon procedure, and Dr. Abbott responded with “I am the doctor and you are the patient, and I am telling you when I am available!” This type of somewhat inconsiderate behavior does not align with patient-centered communication.

**3. In the last scene where Dr. McKee has an exercise for his interns where they have to be in the role of patients:**

* + **What do you think they would learn from the exercise?**

This exercise teaches the interns how patients may be feeling from an emotional/personal aspect during their stay in the hospital. As Dr. McKee expressed, these interns are being taught that patients feel “embarrassed, frightened, vulnerable, and sick.” For example, during the 72 hours of pretending to be patients, the intern will learn how uncomfortable it may feel to be undressed and walk around with just a hospital gown and underwear on in front of strangers. They’ll also learn how anxious and scared many patients feel before and during testing.

* + **How do you think it might make them talk to patients or treat patients differently?**

By understanding the patient’s point of view in the hospital, including the personal and emotional context of it all, the interns may speak to or treat patients in a more compassionate and empathic manner. For example, after the exercise, the intern would learn how vulnerable and scared a patient feels in the hospital; this might lead them to take the time out for future patients to explain how certain procedures are going to work, and make sure that the patient understands what to expect. They may even address their worries and have some reassuring dialogue to make the patient feel better. In the movie, Dr. McKee is noted to react harshly towards an intern who called a patient “the terminal.” After this exercise, the interns may act differently by calling patients by their actual names, as they’ll understand that patients are actual human beings rather than cases to work through on a to-do list.

* + **Extra Credit:**
1. **Give some examples about how Dr. McKee’s approach was “Clinician-Centered” in the beginning and “Patient-Centered” after he had been treated for his cancer.**

In the beginning of the movie, Dr. McKee expressed a more clinician-centered way of practice several times. One of the most notable scenes was when he was re-evaluating his patient who attempted to commit suicide. Instead of using a patient-centered approach by paying attention to the patient’s emotions or why he tried to commit suicide, Dr. McKee insensitively said, “next time you want to give yourself a real punishment, try golf.”

Towards the end of the movie, Dr. McKee used more of a patient-centered approach after he learned what it is like to stand in a patient’s shoes. He took the time out to make sure that his patient, Arturo, and his family had all of their questions and concerns addressed prior to his heart transplantation. In addition, Dr. McKee was seen speaking to Arturo and caressing his head while he was under general anesthesia.

1. **It is said that health care providers sometimes spend too much time treating the disease and not enough time treating the patient.  How is that idea illustrated in this film?**

Dr. Abbott didn’t spend time with Dr. McKee after she told him he had a laryngeal tumor. She did not check to see how Dr. McKee was handling the news, but simply told him what the plans were for testing and treatment, and abruptly left the room. It was obvious that Dr. McKee was left feeling shocked, overwhelmed, and devastated after Dr. Abbott left.

In the beginning of the movie it was also clear to see that Dr. McKee preferred to spend time treating the disease rather than the patient when he was teaching the interns to be more detached. This was clear when an intern had a question about caring for patients, and Dr. McKee responded with “when you’ve got 30 seconds until someone bleed out, I’d rather you cut straight and cared less.”