Guide to setting up the role-play

It is important to take time to set up the role-play before commencing the interaction. Consider such aspects of the role play as whether you will conduct the role-play in pairs or small groups and how you might give feedback.

A. Role-play grouping
B. Reviewing/previewing communication strategies
C. Providing feedback
D. Preparing for the role

Role-play grouping

Work in pairs or groups of three.

If you can, work in groups of three with one person being the RT, one the patient and a third person being an observer to give feedback to the RT. With this triad arrangement, if each participant is an RT student, each student benefits from the perspective offered by each role. For example, when playing the patient, you are literally putting yourself in the patient’s place and can experience the communication from this view. As the observer, you have the freedom to observe the communication without the pressure of being a participant and you may find that you notice much more detail from this vantage point.

If you work in pairs, consider doing the role-play with a non-RT student who plays the role of the patient so you can simulate an interaction with a real patient who may not know as much about RT as you do.

Reviewing/previewing communication strategies

Before you commence the role-play, preview your strategies for giving information. The following strategies for giving information are adapted from Lloyd & Bor (2009, pp.50-55).

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Prefering to give information

- Before preparing to give information first ensure you understand the information
- Use language and concepts the patient will understand
- Invite the patient to listen carefully to the information (consider the impact of pain, nausea or other discomfort on the patients’ ability to concentrate)
- Check your assumptions about the patients’ ability and desire to know the details of their condition and the treatment.
- What do they already know (ask them)
- What is the patients’ education level and cognitive ability (you can probably sense this from your informal conversation with the patient)
- How much detail does the patient wish to be provided?
- Determine what are the key items of information you must convey and consider how you might provide the more detailed aspects of information – eg. brochure, diagrams, literature- and take these with you when you see the patient.

Strategies for giving information

First assess patient understanding, then construct a plan about how to give the information to the patient. It is important to break information down into sections so that the patient can take it in.

Lloyd and Bor (2009, p. 58) recommend outlining the structure of the information to be given by signposting.

- Prioritise information by giving the most important information first
- Augment information giving with diagrams and pictures where appropriate.
- Present the information in plain language using short words and sentences and avoiding medical jargon
- Add patient-centred sensitivity by exploring the patients’ views about the information given.
- To check patient understanding, have patient feedback to you what you have just said.
- invite the patient to ask questions
Providing feedback

Before starting the role-play scenario, it is important to determine who will provide feedback and how this will be done.

Feedback in a group of three

If there is a third person who takes the role of the observer, this person can take the initiative in seeking feedback from the RT and the patient as well as providing feedback.

Feedback in a pair

If the role-play is conducted in a pair format then the patient can take the initiative to elicit a self-appraisal from the RT as well as providing feedback.

Consider organising the feedback in this form:

Ask the student who played the role of the RT to name 2 things they did well during the role-play and two areas they would like to improve.

1. Positives first- *What did you think you did well?*
2. Areas to improve- *What areas of the communication would you like to improve?*

Alternatively the student playing the role of the RT could explain what was difficult and what was easy when they were in the role. Constructive feedback involves details about why something was effective or not-effective.

Preparing for the role

The 6 preparation steps for role-play

1. Identify the key communication issues/tasks for the role
2. Review/preview communication strategies to address the issues emerging from the scenarios
3. Decide who will play each role

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4. Prepare for the role-play by imagining yourself in the role of the RT or the patient
5. Spend some time reading and reflecting on the role and allow yourself to develop your role and character. If you are playing the RT, identify the key communication tasks for the scenario and consider ways to address patient concerns. If you are playing the patient, put yourself in the patient’s place and plan what the patient might do and say.
6. Determine how you will provide feedback.