

## PHYSICIAN - PATIENT INTERACTION AS ASSESSED BY THE UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS

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**Abstract :** *The interaction between a physician and his or her patient is complex and occurs by means of both the technical performance and through a personal relationship. The present analysis of 891 patients cross – sectional study design using an interview schedule, in order to find out the satisfaction level among patients which interacting with the physician, through a 61.5% of the patients were completely satisfied with the information provided by the physician but nearly 8% of them were not satisfied with the process of the communication provided by the physicians; 92% of the physician interactions was good. Although, majority of the patients were satisfied with the physician's interaction. However, we should not ignore the dissatisfied group, though few in number. In addition, the programme stimulated the medical undergraduates and sensitised them in this vital area of communication.*

### INTRODUCTION

The “Doctor - Patient Relationship” plays a pivotal role in the provision of health care. Especially, after inclusion of the medical profession under the Consumer Protection Act in our country, the emphasis on “Doctor – Patient relationship” has become crucial. The interaction between the medical professional and his or her patient occurs by means of technical performance from the physician and through their personal relationship<sup>1</sup>. However, the personal relationship is very complex. In general, effective interaction between the physician and the patient gives a very clear idea about the disease of the patient to the doctor and it helps the patient to follow the advice of the physician.

Then the immediate question that comes to our mind is “what do patients want?” Patients want more and better information about their problem and the outcomes, more openness about the side effects of treatment, relief of pain and emotional distress and advice on what they can do for themselves<sup>2</sup>. Also, it should be remembered that it is not simple to measure the expectation / satisfaction of a patient that would ideally be communicated at the medical consultation. In this paper, an attempt is made to assess the physician - patient interaction at Urban Health Centre Out patient Services of a Medical College Hospital.

The consensus on the qualities required of a doctor are respect, compassion and integrity, which are strongly related to the doctor – patient interaction and can be better achieved when linked to the practice of medicine. When a professor attends a patient with respect and integrity, there is a higher chance that the student will have the same type of behavior with his or her own patient<sup>1</sup>. With this view, the medical students were involved in this study to assess the interactions between the physician and patient, so that the medical student will understand the patient's expectation and practice medicine

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without reducing the importance of technical performance or moving away from the doctor's own ethical orientation.

The primary objective of this study is to find out whether the physician's interaction is satisfactory to the patient. The other objectives is to correlate with the patient's parameters such as age and sex.

### MATERIAL & METHODS

Twenty (20) medical undergraduate students in their second year (after completion of their pre-clinical subjects Anatomy, Physiology and Biochemistry) were allocated to the Urban Health Centre of RMMC, Chidambaram, for 5 days i.e. for 2 days in August and 3 days in September 2004, as two batches of 10 each, during their community medicine postings. They were allowed to interview the patients, who were attending the Urban Health Centre for treatment, regarding the physician's interaction with the patients. Each patient was interviewed only once.

The Urban Health Centre is located at the South Car Street of the famous Temple town Chidambaram. The centre caters to a population of around 7000. For outpatient services, the population of the Chidambaram town and nearby villages approaches the centre for the treatment. The common diseases treated here are URI, LRI, myalgia, gastritis, etc. If it is needed, the patients are referred to the medical college hospital.

A *questionnaire* (as below) with seven questions was prepared on a 3 point scale measurement. (1.) No interaction/ no satisfaction (2)Partial interaction/partially satisfied and, (3.) Full interaction / fully satisfied.

1. Did you convey all your problems to the Doctor?
2. Did the Doctor listen patiently to your complaints?
3. Did the Doctor inform about your illness and advise further investigations?
4. Were you informed about the dosage of medicines and the timing?
5. Were you informed about any dietary restrictions?
6. Were you informed about any preventive measures?
7. Were you instructed about the next visit? (Follow up)

The score assigned was 2 for completely satisfied or interacted, 1 for partially satisfied or interacted and 0 (zero) for no interaction or dissatisfied for that question. Hence the maximum