

## **Communicating with Patients and Families in the Nighttime Role Questions**

1. Which of the following are challenges to effective communication with patients and parents at night?
  - a. Lack of established relationship with the patient or parent
  - b. Potential for frequent interruptions and/or other time constraints
  - c. Appropriate amount of information about the patient available
  - d. Both a and b
  - e. None of the above
  
2. True or False: Characteristics of both patients and clinicians can contribute to failed communication.
  
3. True or False: Interpersonal sensitivity is an important component of physician-parent-child communication.
  
4. Which of the following is not an appropriate action when approaching an angry patient or parent?
  - a. Elicit the parent's emotions and directly address them
  - b. Focus the conversation on the medical facts to avoid unnecessary conflict
  - c. Accept responsibility and apologize when appropriate
  - d. Be aware of your own emotions and how they are influencing your responses
  
5. All of the following will help providers improve communication with patients and parents EXCEPT:
  - a. eliciting and responding to the patient's underlying emotions
  - b. setting appropriate boundaries
  - c. using open-ended questions and active listening skills
  - d. focusing only on transmission of information about the patient's condition

## **Communicating with Patients and Families in the Nighttime Role Answers**

1. Answer = d

2. Answer = True

Patients or parents are perceived to be “difficult” if they raise negative feelings within the clinician, cause the clinician to experience self-doubt, do not assume the role expected by the health care professional, or have beliefs, values, or characteristics that differ from those of the clinician. All of these factors may lead to ineffective communication. In addition, clinicians often have negative emotional responses to patients that are not fully recognized and lead to unconstructive behaviors. Additionally, clinicians receive biomedical training, focused on identification and treatment of the disease, and may not receive adequate psychosocial training, focused on communication and relationship-building. These are some of the ways that both patients and clinicians contribute to failed communication.

3. Answer = True

Effective communication between providers and patients or parents has three components – informativeness, interpersonal sensitivity, and partnership building. Informativeness refers to the quantity and quality of health information provided by physician. Interpersonal sensitivity refers to the affective behaviors that reflect the physician’s attention to, and interest in, the parents’ and child’s feelings and concerns. Partnership building refers to the extent to which the physician invites the parents (and child) to state their concerns, perspectives, and suggestions.

4. Answer = b

Effective communication between providers and patients or parents has three components – informativeness, interpersonal sensitivity, and partnership building. Clinicians should elicit the parent’s emotions and respond to them appropriately. Clinicians should also be self-aware, recognizing their own emotional responses to the situation that may lead to unconstructive behaviors and poor communication. For example, if the clinician feels threatened and wants to avoid conflict, he or she may try to monopolize or take control of the conversation or situation – as detailed in answer choice b. This does not promote effective communication, as it is not sensitive to the parent’s emotions or needs and neglects to promote partnership building.

5. Answer = d

Effective communication between providers and patients or parents has three components – informativeness, interpersonal sensitivity, and partnership building. Effective communication can be achieved by being patient-centered, using active listening skills (such as open-ended questions, summarizing what the patient says, etc), setting appropriate boundaries, using problem solving skills, and demonstrating empathy. A focus on identification and treatment of the disease, as opposed to acknowledging the contribution of psychosocial issues, does not lead to optimal communication.