Heathcare Communication for Virginia Community College System Nurse and Allied Health Programs: An Interdisciplinary Approach and Model Course
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This study examines communication skills in the nurse–patient communication process through interdisciplinary data from the nurse and communication fields. The call for improved communication competency over the last 20 years, and the low rate of skill retention from remedial on-the-job communication workshops, confirm the need for improved communication training at the educational level. Research substantiates improved patient outcomes and patient satisfaction when relational communication is utilized in the nurse–patient relationship. Problems in creating an effective healthcare communication course are the absence of a theoretical framework and a multitude of definitions describing communication concepts and skills.

Community colleges educate over 60% of the nation’s nurse and allied health professionals, yet few Virginia community college nurse or allied programs require a communication course. Communication training is provided within clinical courses and frequently utilizes a task-oriented approach. Findings show an interrelationship between conceptualized behaviors, such as therapeutic behaviors and interpersonal skill behaviors, within relational communication that is not apparent in task-oriented communication training. A model healthcare relational communication course was designed to fill the gap between education and practice for communication competence for Virginia community college nurse and allied health students. The model’s framework is communication relational theory, which includes both conceptual behaviors and multidimensional interpersonal skill behaviors.

The designed course was approved to be a Master Course listing in the Virginia Community College System in 2014. The Master Course listings includes transfer acceptance at all Virginia State Universities. The course may serve as a model for other community colleges and community college systems.