Teaching Bedside Manners to Medical Students: Opportunities in Psychosomatic Medicine and Literature Review
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Background: Bedside manner involves provider behaviors communicated during patient encounters. In a recent survey, physicians are judged more on bedside manner than effectiveness of care (1). Bedside manners can be taught by direct observation and role modeling (2, 3). Existing training modules mostly include classroom demonstrations, workshops, and training sessions (4). These skills also can be developed through training that is embedded during actual clinical care. Competencies of Psychosomatic Medicine (PM) rotation covering various medical and surgical units include focus on meeting the needs of patients and families, and professionalism. Compassion, empathy, and sensitivity are called for on a daily basis in Psychosomatic Medicine (5). We are working on a teaching model in hospital psychiatry using Mini-Clinical Evaluation Exercise (Mini-Cex) where medical students get exposed to bedside communication. Students interview patients during follow up visits for 10-15 minutes under direct observation of supervising attending physician. MINI-Cex is primarily a tool for assessing patient care and it also includes assessing counseling skills. Emphasis for counseling include: the student interact with the patient professionally (showing respect, compassion, empathy) and education (explains rationale for test/treatment). In the last 3 years, 87 students have completed MINI-Cex interviewing.

Objective: We wanted to see what is out in the literature in the area of teaching bedside manners for students during inpatient clerkship. Following is a review of literature on teaching bedside manners in PM clerkship and any tools to measure bedside manners.

Methods: Medline database was searched using the key words bedside manner, bedside manner teaching, clerkship, medical students, consultation-liaison psychiatry and psychosomatic medicine.

Results: Articles in bedside manner n=48, mostly commentaries, suggestions and perspectives. Articles related to PM n=4. Articles focusing on medical students n=2. We did not identify a scale that measures bedside manner.

Conclusion: There is a need for a framework and educational module where communication skills can be taught as part of patient care in hospital. Mini-Cex is primarily a tool for assessing patient care and a feasible tool to give feedback in the area of bedside communication in hospital setting. PM has great opportunity to teach communication skills to students and contribute to this much needed area of modern medicine.

References:
1. McCarthy M. US doctors are judged more on bedside manner than effectiveness of care, survey finds. BMJ. 2014 Jul 28;349