Professionalism and the Patient Experience

Patient Services Managers for Networks 7, 15, and 17
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What Is Professionalism?

• The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a professional as:
  – *Characterized by or conforming to the technical or ethical standards of a profession.*
  – *Exhibiting a courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike manner in the workplace.*
Why Is Professionalism Important?

• Patients who come to your clinic to dialyze:
  – Are ill and vulnerable.
  – Have expectations about how the interaction should go and how you, as the dialysis provider and healthcare professional, should behave toward them.
Role Reversal

• How would you react if you were in the hospital and the following happened?
  – You heard one nurse talking negatively about another nurse.
  – Your nurse spoke a language you did not understand in front of you to another staff member.
  – Your nurse smelled of cigarette smoke or strong perfume.
  – The nurse/technician/doctor did not explain to you what he or she was doing as it was being done.
  – You observed a hospital staff member roll his or her eyes when asked for assistance by another staff member.
  – You heard a staff member groaning about being ready to end his or her shift.
Less Obvious Unprofessional Behaviors

• Unprofessional, but not so obvious behaviors include:
  – Calling a patient by a nickname, unless specifically requested by the patient to do so.
  – Driving a patient to the mall in your own car.
  – Loaning a patient money.
  – Spending time with a patient outside the dialysis center.
Professional Behavior
Characteristics of Professional Behavior

• Professional behavior in the dialysis clinic includes:
  – Greeting the patient upon arrival.
  – Explaining what you will be doing and why.
  – Being open to patient questions.
  – Performing your tasks competently.
  – Doing what you say you will do.
  – Pulling up a chair and talking to the patient at eye-level.
  – Being aware of your tone of voice.
Improve Professionalism Through Self-Awareness

• Improve your professional and people skills by asking yourself:
  – What are my strengths and weaknesses?
  – How can I improve my professionalism?
  – What am I doing to create a healthy professional environment?
  – Are my interactions positive in nature?
  – Am I making a good impression on my patients and with other staff members?
  – What lessons have I learned that will help me to provide the best quality of care to patients?
What Is a Boundary?

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines a boundary as:

• *Unofficial rules about what should not be done: limits that define acceptable behavior.*
Avoid Crossing Boundaries

• When you are doing something with/for a patient, ask yourself if this activity:
  – Is a normal, expected part of practice for members of the profession?
  – Could compromise your relationship with this patient, other patients, and/or colleagues?
  – Might cause others to question your professional objectivity?
  – Is one in which you would want your other patients, colleagues/professionals, or the public to know you are engaged?
  – Is more to benefit you or the patient?
Be an Effective Communicator

• Recognize that different individuals respond to different communication styles.
• Realize that some styles are more effective than others in certain situations.
• Shift your communication style based on your patient’s needs and the situation.
10 Steps to Better Listening by Forbes

Step 1: Face the speaker and maintain eye contact.
Step 2: Be attentive, but relaxed.
Step 3: Keep an open mind.
Step 4: Listen to the words and try to picture what the speaker is saying.
Step 5: Do not interrupt and do not impose your "solutions."
Step 6: Wait for the speaker to pause to ask clarifying questions.
Step 7: Ask questions only to ensure understanding.
Step 8: Try to feel what the speaker is feeling.
Step 9: Give the speaker regular feedback.
Step 10: Pay attention to what isn't said to nonverbal cues.

Ten Tips on How Professionals Should Handle Patient Complaints

**Tip 1:** Listen to your patient’s complaint without interrupting.

**Tip 2:** Listen for your patient’s disappointment.

**Tip 3:** Move your patient to a quiet and private area to discuss his or her complaint.

**Tip 4:** Avoid rationalizing, being defensive.

**Tip 5:** Avoid educating—now is not the time.
Tip 6: Avoid going into “problem-solving” mode immediately.

Tip 7: Respectfully use the patient’s name in your reply.

Tip 8: Demonstrate understanding.

Tip 9: Start the grievance paperwork—hand it off to the right person to address it.

Tip 10: Circle back afterward and ask if your efforts were effective.
References


• Maister, D. True Professionalism. 2000: June.


Thank you!