

Letter to Editor

Emotional intelligence: new vistas in health care

INTRODUCTION

The faculty of health care profession like medical and dental sciences has evolved remarkably as not only catering to the patient's diagnosis and treatment of diseases but also their emotional concerns. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is our capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and managing emotions well in us and our relationships. It allows health care professionals to create an environment in which they can fully apply their abilities and accumulated experience in dealing with patients. Emotional intelligence addresses the emotional, personal, social, and survival dimensions of intelligence. Emotional quotient (EQ) can be defined as the set of skills people use to read, understand, and respond intelligently to the emotional signals sent to us both by others and by ourselves. Emotional quotient (EQ) translates psychological knowledge into terms that are useable by people not professionally trained in psychology like, dentists [1]. Examples of EQ skills include empathy, which is the ability to accurately read what other people are feeling, emotional self-awareness the ability to read what we ourselves are feeling, stress tolerance the ability to withstand anxiety without falling apart, and the ability to create mutually satisfying relationships. Mayer and Salovey described emotional intelligence as a set of abilities. It is operationally defined by the following four skills: correctly identifying emotions in self and others, using emotions to facilitate reasoning, understanding emotions and managing emotions [2]. In 1983 Howard Gardner's introduced the idea of multiple intelligences which included both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people whereas intrapersonal intelligence, the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivations [3]. Usually health care professionals like dentist & clinicians spend more time in developing their clinical and technical skills rather than their interpersonal or intrapersonal skills. This technical side of things often makes the least difference in a patients' decision process. If technical side is developed in isolation from emotional skills, problems arise in patient trust.

Importance of Empathy in Patient-Dentist Relationship

Empathy is the ability to recognize how others think and feel. Empathy means recognizing, and responding appropriately to the emotions of others. Clinicians should perceive thoughts and feeling of patient during period of patient's management e.g. patients undergoing cancer therapy or chronic Oro-facial pain which is a long term treatment which may make patient feel depress and anxious. So according to that patient's state of mind they should be adequately managed through counseling. It also helps to understands patient's anxiety and stress.

Types of Empathy

The first empathy is with a person's actual situation. The second empathy is with a person's aspirations. The strong empathy shown by health care professional represents an attempt to strengthen the human element in clinical relationship [4]. It also helps in better prognosis of the treatment.

Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Medical field

- To understand the patient better.
- To know the problem of psychological origin.
- To deliver the treatment in a meaningful and effective manner.
- To establish effective communication with the patient and their relatives.
- To gain confidence of patient.
- To help the patient overcome fear and anxiety of treatment.
- To have a better treatment planning and interaction with other discipline.
- To produce a comfortable environment for the healthcare team to work on the patient.
- To teach and motivate the patient importance of primary and preventive care.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) Tips That All Clinicians/Dentists Can Use [5]

Keep a fuzzy file on patients: Remembering small details about your patients important to develop maintain and re-establish a relationship with patients when they come in.

Develop your listening skill: Focus on what patients are saying and empathizing with them. As a medical and dental professional it is especially important to work on listening skills as it helps to identify patients root concerns.

Avoid only using closed questions: Questions like these are only effective for getting you specific information fast and offer a very limited way of communicating with your patients.

Prime Practice: Using some open-ended questions, those that can't be answered in one or a few words - will help you build and maintain rapport with patients and encourage them to provide you with maximum information.

Spend time building patient relationships: At first visit of a patient extra time should be spent to build rapport with a patient which helps them to accept a big case proposal. It may be counter-intuitive, but if clinician tries to build case acceptance, then it's better to spend more time on the beginning of the patient's experiences with practice.

Show Empathy: Showing empathy and warmth is vocal quality. Vary your pitch and keep your comments congruent with your body language. Emotional Intelligence also helps in developing the necessary skills to conduct effective patient interviews, for teaching patients to manage their fears and anxieties, and for dealing with patients who need counseling. These changes help increased case acceptance, decreased stress levels and improvements in their relationships' with patients and staffs. Pau et al [6] in their study explored how dental undergraduates with different levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) cope with stress, shows that high students were more likely to adopt reflection and appraisal, social and interpersonal, and organization and time-management skills. Emotional Intelligence influences how well practitioner recognize and manage their emotions and professional relationships [7].

CONCLUSION

Emotional skills contribute to success in implementing a relationship-based model of health care practice. Applying Emotional intelligence makes patient feel

comfortable with doctor. Health care professional must understand the specific feelings that cause stress and learn ways to become more at peace. This way doctors can deal easily with their professional burnout and will easily understand and handling patients. Emotionally Intelligent person is less likely to fall prey to social evils such as drugs and alcohol. Such medical professionals are more satisfied with their social networks and appear to receive more social support.

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Authors:

Dr Suman Sen*, Dr Mukesh Asrani*, Dr Hiren Patadiya*, Dr. Sheuli Sen**

*Senior Lecturers- Dept. of Oral Medicine and Radiology
Karnavati School Of Dentistry
Ahmedabad, Gujrat, India
Email- Sumansen20@yahoo.co.in

**Professor and Head Department of Pediatrics
B.M Birla Collage of Nursing. Kolkata
