

Patients With Disabilities as Teachers (P-DAT): Do Participants Retain What Is Taught and is it Relevant to Practice?

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Patients With Disabilities as Teachers (P-DAT): Do Participants Retain What Is Taught and is it Relevant to Practice?

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Background

Within medical education, it is recognized that limited resources exist for training physicians to care for patients with disabilities.¹ A lack of awareness of “Disability Etiquette” might lead to inappropriate behaviors and poor communication between physicians and patients. This can interfere with establishing an effective patient-doctor relationship.

What is P-DAT?

- 3-hour, interactive session created at Lehigh Valley Health Network
- Introduction to Disability Etiquette, “Person-First” language
- Stories from patients/family members about their experiences with health care providers
- Candid discussions between stakeholders and medical learners



Purpose

Previous research^{2,3} has shown that the medical learners who participate in the P-DAT sessions emerge with newly acquired knowledge. We wanted to know whether they retained what they learned and if they use it in clinical practice.

Methodology

- Population: 33 medical students and residents who participated in P-DAT sessions in 2010
- Recruitment: E-mail and telephone requests for participation
- Data Collection: Telephone survey using open-ended questions
- Data Analysis: Responses analyzed with an inductive, thematic approach using Nvivo v.10 software by QSR International Inc.

Results

- Response rate: 45% (n=15)
 - 9 agreed to participate
 - 4 declined
 - 2 initially agreed and then were deemed “Not Available” after multiple attempts to connect

Emergent Themes

1 Recollections of P-DAT Sessions

- Patients/parents served as the teachers
- Learned about how to refer to persons with disabilities
- “Person-First” language

2 Relevance to Practice

- Comments about clinical encounters
- References to care needs (referrals/transportation issues/equipment)
- Interactions with patients
- Some noted how they might have approached patients if they had not had the training:

“I wouldn’t have known what questions to ask at all.”

“As terrible as it sounds I might not have talked to the patient before the P-DAT training.”

3 Emotions Triggered

- Related to P-DAT Sessions
 - “Eye-opening”
 - Appreciation for new knowledge
 - Presentation “impacted me”
 - Disability Etiquette training “is needed”
- Related to Clinical Practice
 - Helped “allay some of the fear” of treating patients
 - Helped in “gaining more trust” from patients

“It’s helped me have a much better relationship with my patients. ... At the end of the visit they feel they received good care, and they want to return.”

4 Verbiage used by speaker

- “Appropriate”^{*}
 - “Person with diabetes”/“person with paraplegia”
 - “Cognitive impairment”
 - Several participants noted importance of using appropriate language to speak with/about patients with disabilities
 - Some mentioned using appropriate language in documentation
- “Inappropriate”^{*}
 - Referred to patients with disabilities as “these people” (categorization)
 - “Significantly mentally retarded”
 - “Wheelchair bound”/“bed bound”
 - Spoke about having “dealt with” patients with disabilities

^{*}Researchers determined these using standards of Disability Etiquette and Person-First language



Word Cloud using “Recollections” and “Emotional Trigger” nodes (generated using Nvivo v. 10)

Discussion

- Every participant expressed appreciation for P-DAT programming
 - Glad they got training early in career
 - Valuable for improving practice

“The reason I wanted to participate in the study is that I feel that the more training we get will help us to interact with patients better.”

- Many participants made personal connection to information in P-DAT training
 - Patients with disabilities in their practice
 - Family members with disabilities
 - Reflection on self as physician

- Comments about P-DAT content often contained words indicating an “emotional trigger”

- “Comfortable”
- “Fortunate”
- “Mindful”
- “Respectful”

- A limitation of the study is that social norms might discourage individuals from providing negative feedback in a live interview

Conclusions

- Results add validity to previous study and further demonstrate that “Person-First” Language was biggest take-away from P-DAT training
- Responses indicated that participants feel their clinical encounters have been improved as a result of P-DAT
- Many emphasized importance of providing opportunities for physicians to learn from patients at an early stage in their careers

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