

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION OF MEDICAL RADIOLOGY ENGINEERS AND PATIENTS THROUGH THE LENS OF EMPATHY

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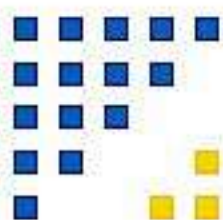
Summary

Effective communication is essential for the quality of healthcare and patient satisfaction in medical institutions. Empathy as part of emotional intelligence plays a major role in the interaction between healthcare workers and the patient, as it helps to understand patient needs, reduce stress and improve patient experience. This paper analyzes theoretical concepts and practical aspects of empathy in the scope of medical radiology; it examines the

challenges and preparations that may arise when communicating and provides guidance on how to improve the connection between medical radiology engineers and patients. Addressing this phenomenon enables the development of strategies to improve communication skills as well as compassion, which can lead to better patient outcomes and contribute to an effective working environment for medical staff.

Keywords: communication, patient, medical radiology engineer, empathy, interaction





INTRODUCTION

Empathy is the ability to emotionally understand what other people are feeling, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place. Essentially, it's about putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they're feeling. Empathy means that when you see another person suffering, for example after losing a loved one, you can immediately imagine yourself going through that same experience and feel what they are going through.

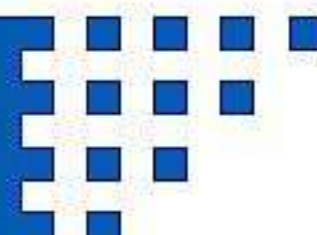
While people can be well attuned to their own feelings and emotions, "getting" into someone else's head can be a bit more challenging. The ability to feel empathy allows people to "walk a mile in someone else's shoes," so to speak. It allows people to understand the emotions others are feeling (1). Empathy is now recognized as a critically important component of human well-being. It helps establish human connections that give meaning to our lives and broadens our mental landscape, allowing us to gain a new perspective on the world and our own lives. "A sign of a healthy mind," wrote psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, "is the ability of an individual to imaginatively and accurately enter into the thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears of another person, but also to allow that person to do the same to him." Yet, if empathy is so beneficial for us and deeply ingrained in our brains, it remains unclear why we don't resort to it more often (2).

Empathy is the most important human characteristic that not only enables social relations and communication, but is also the basis for creating morality (3). Unconditional acceptance of a person and their perspective on a situation, without judgment or evaluations, is an essential prerequisite for empathetic communication. To understand the interlocutor, it is important to use active listening and observation skills in communication and to

check that we have understood the patient well. When expressing understanding, it is important to non-verbally show warmth, kindness, interest and use mirroring, while verbally the most important techniques are reflection and paraphrasing (1).

Empathy is often regarded as a vague, pleasant emotion. Many people equate it with common kindness and emotional sensitivity, with gentleness and caring towards others. Empathy is actually an ideal that has the power to transform our lives and bring about profound social change. Empathy can start a revolution. Not one of those old-fashioned revolutions based on new laws, institutions, or governments, but something much more radical: a revolution of human relationships (4). Over the past decade, there has been a flood of empathetic way of thinking and behaving around the world, sustained by political activists, advisors responding to readers' letters in newspapers, business gurus, and religious leaders. Protesters in the Occupy movement in the UK and the United States set up "tents of empathy" and conducted workshops on "empathetic activism". Hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren have been taught empathy skills through the Canadian educational program Roots of Empathy, which has spread to Britain, New Zealand, and other countries. In this program, young children are brought into classrooms and transformed into teachers. All of these initiatives are part of a historical wave of empathy that challenges our highly individualistic self-obsessed cultures, in which most of us have become too preoccupied with our own lives to think about anything else (2).

Empathy is not the same as the golden rule, "Treat others as you would like to be treated," because it implies aligning our interests with



those of the other person. George Bernard Shaw commented on this in his characteristic style when he wisely noted, “Do not do unto others as you would that they should do unto you. Their tastes may not be the same.” Empathy is the discovery of these different tastes (5). Empathy plays a key role in interpersonal relationships, supports emotional connection and strengthens social ties.

In addition, empathy is a fundamental element of modern societies because it contributes to

understanding diversity, reducing conflicts, and promoting cooperation.

Developing empathy can have a positive impact on individuals and communities. This includes the ability to actively listen, ask questions to better understand the perspectives of others, and express support and compassion. An empathic approach can improve interpersonal relationships, resolve conflicts, and contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment (6).

EMPATHY AS A MEASURE OF SOCIAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT

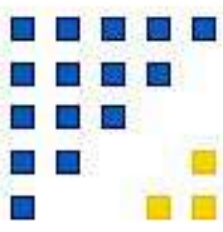
Due to its crucial role in communication and social interaction, empathy is also used as a measure of social competence development, especially in the medical profession. Conversation and human approach to the patient are the most important forms of interaction that machines and devices will never be able to fully replace. In my work, encountering various people frequently, I have observed a lack of empathy in many individuals. Being a healthcare professional involves providing support to traumatized individuals, whether physically or mentally, and daily exposure to direct contact with patients and their struggles, traumas, and sad or unfortunate stories.

I remember a patient crying while waiting for a CT scan. Before calling her in for a CT scan, I approached her and asked why she was crying, she didn't want to say anything. After the scan, I asked if I could help in any way, she said that I couldn't. She said she completed secondary school, a three-year program, and a course in tailoring, and that she has two underage daughters. She lives in a family home. Unemployed. Her father committed suicide about 30 years ago. Her father underwent the

same diagnosis, and it reminded her of him, which made her cry... I reiterated that I was available for any kind of help, to which she replied that I had already helped her a lot by just listening. She thanked me for everything, for listening to her, and for the kind words. After that, I felt happy, even though I didn't do anything special, but it is obvious that for someone, a kind word and a genuine, decent human relationship are enough. I was happy to be a healthcare worker and to have shown at least a small dose of empathy and wiped away someone's tear from their face.

On the contrary, we also encounter many healthcare workers who seem to have stumbled into this profession, as they completely lack empathy in their character. Through many examples in my work interacting with patients, I found that my kindness, combined with the patient's vulnerability in that moment, would lead to a relationship filled with trust and reciprocity. In this way, the healthcare worker gains complete insight into the patient's condition, family situation, and the circumstances leading up to their trauma.

Trust is the key to such a relationship. On the



other hand, a colleague, also a healthcare worker, who is insensitive with poor behavior control and a tendency to manipulate and deceive, would end up in a conflictual situation with the same patient. Empathy shifts the focus from the medical radiology engineer to the patients—to attempt to imagine how the patient actually feels in their situation; seeing the world through their eyes rather than your own. Of course, it is never possible to fully enter the inner world of another person, but empathy is an attempt to get as close as possible to that reality. It may, although much less often, happen that some patients try to take advantage of our ability to be compassionate, understanding and empathetic. To protect our personal and professional rights, it is important to know techniques for refusing unreasonable requests and to express thoughts and emotions openly and clearly in such situations (7, 8).

Some objective circumstances may prevent healthcare professionals from using empathy

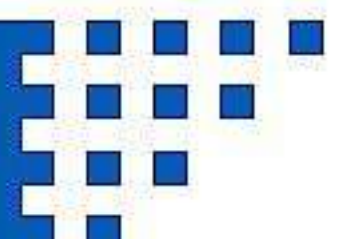
skills: inadequate spatial conditions in healthcare institutions, lack of time, inability to ensure patient privacy or lack of support for such communication by associates. Even when these circumstances are somewhat satisfactory, the interactions that healthcare professionals engage in are often brief and superficial, and “problematic” topics are avoided in communication. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate teaching about the benefits of empathy and practicing empathy skills into the education of healthcare professionals. To prevent stress and burnout, it is necessary to hold regular team meetings where cases are collectively reviewed, communication strategies with patients are discussed, and supervision is provided, allowing healthcare professionals to express their feelings in a supportive group environment (9).

THE IMPORTANCE OF RADIOLOGICAL ENGINEERS' EMPATHY

Diagnostic tests in the Radiology Department hold a special place within the healthcare system. Effective communication is essential in preparing patients for the procedures they are undergoing. Almost every medical intervention carries a certain risk, and radiology is no exception. Radiology engineers often work under pressure and a certain level of stress, frequently encountering uncomfortable situations. Therefore, it is crucial that they remain composed, conscientious, and responsible in their work, as fatal errors can occur. Working with medical devices that utilize ionizing radiation for diagnostic purposes carries significant risks for both the patient and the radiology engineer (3). Therefore, expertise and professionalism in performing duties are of a high standard. The risk that may arise from certain examinations

due to excessive radiation exposure is mitigated because radiology engineers are competent in performing their tasks.

Education and knowledge instill confidence and alleviate fear when performing tasks, resulting in a successful outcome of the diagnostic procedure (10). On a daily basis, they are in direct contact with patients who, in certain situations, need to use a contrast agent, and explain to the patient the reasons for its use. With their knowledge, experience, and assertive attitude, they are obliged to instill trust in communication with the patient. Upon arrival at the health facility, patients often feel discomfort, fear and uncertainty about the diagnostic procedure itself or the outcome of treatment. It is important to accurately explain the examination procedure, what dangers, if



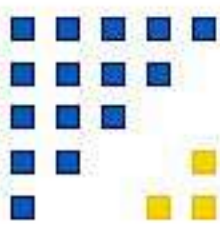
any, exist from ionizing radiation, how long the examination will take, when they can expect the results, how they may feel after the examination, and whether everything is okay...

When considering the relationship between a patient and a medical radiology engineer, it is clear that empathy is not only reserved for doctors, but is also crucial for radiology engineers who perform diagnostic procedures (11). One of the key moments, where empathy plays a key role, is during the preparation of the patient for the diagnostic procedure. Patients often experience stress and anxiety due to uncertainty or fear of diagnosis. This is exactly where medical radiology engineers come into contact with patients, and their ability to empathize can significantly alleviate these emotions. When providing clear information, placing the patient on the imaging table, and tailoring protocols to individual needs, engineers can create an environment that supports the patient's emotional comfort. In addition, during the diagnostic procedure itself, where patients are often exposed to unfamiliar and sometimes unpleasant situations, an engineer's empathetic approach can be crucial. Ensuring that the patient understands the procedure, providing support during the examination, and a sense of understanding for any fears or discomfort are all components that contribute to a positive patient experience. An empathetic approach not only reduces stress but also facilitates patient cooperation, which can lead to higher-quality diagnostic images. It is important to emphasize that empathy is not only a tool to reduce patient stress, but also plays a key role in improving the quality of care. By understanding the patient's specific needs and ensuring tailored approaches, medical radiology engineers contribute to the precision of diagnostic procedures. This not only ensures the reliability of the results, but also increases patient confidence in the medical team (12). The greatest human suffering is

caused by disease. A person experiences shock, breaks down and reacts with different feelings. They experience helplessness, fear, anger, self-pity, powerlessness and loss of personal values. Acting as an impenetrable wall in front of a person then requires superhuman strength.

All those who have committed to the demanding profession of healthcare workers strive and wish to be dedicated to their work, as they often encounter the great suffering of their patients. It is human to offer love, to be ready to help, to comfort, to encourage, and to praise. Given the significance of the value of human life, they must professionally demonstrate a certain level of patience, communication, and empathy. They are aware that before them is a seriously ill person for whom a gentle touch and a soft gaze have a calming effect. Patients sometimes feel very lonely in their pain, and in the cold hospital corridors, only silence speaks. This saddens and depresses the patient. Those "magic" words: please, thank you, may I, seem to have become forbidden by law for some people. Already at the first contact, the patient senses whether a humane and friendly relationship has been established. At that moment, they feel that they are in safe hands and often expect a miracle of healing. Medical radiology engineers are obliged in such moments to listen attentively, act with compassion, and treat patients humanely, encouraging them not to lose hope. (13).

However, not everyone possesses the skill of effective and quality communication. Some lack emotions, the ability, knowledge, and skills for active listening. Regarding the lack of empathy, humane treatment towards patients, feelings of powerlessness, and the belittlement of individuals by healthcare staff, the companion of a seriously ill person critically reflected in a piece titled "It Will Be Okay": *"Is there a place in the world where a person feels more miserable than in the basement of a hospital, sitting for*



hours in a hallway, waiting, waiting, while no one even asks if they need anything, where no one cares even about a single platelet. And the sign on the door reads: Don't knock! Do not disturb! Wait! Get out! Is there a place worse than this, where you are merely a statistical figure, some curve with pluses and minuses, a case, a number, without a name or surname? The gods in white pass by, both small and big, with deadly serious faces, stethoscopes in their pockets or around their

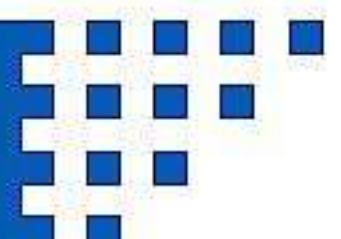
necks, just enough for one to know who the gods are and who the cleaner or the one pushing the wheelchair is, while the young woman and that tall young man without eyelashes or eyebrows, with sad eyes and a gaze full of fear, wait and wait. And I wait with them. And nothing has to be like this: just a single smile on the face of the god in white, just a look full of understanding and something akin to "don't be afraid" would make a world of difference (8).

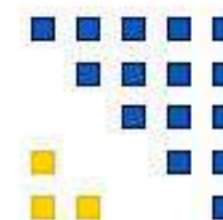
CONCLUSION

Empathy is an essential part of the professional toolkit that is indispensable in the daily communication of medical radiology engineers with patients. Recognizing others' emotions depends on the mental and spiritual capacity of the healthcare worker; these are qualities that characterize a person who has chosen her/his profession wisely. Empathy is very important, sometimes it is very difficult to recognize it in real life. When you understand the perspectives and feelings of others, it becomes easier to treat them with compassion and kindness. Likewise, if you work on improving your empathy, you are more likely to be fulfilled. Empathy between the patient and the medical radiology engineer is a key factor in creating a humanized and effective health system. Through feelings of understanding and care, engineers not only facilitate the patient's journey through

diagnostic procedures but also play a key role in achieving the best possible outcomes. This emotional connection is not just an addition to the technical side of medicine, but an essential foundation that makes healthcare complete and holistic.

There are numerous benefits to empathy: from building emotional connections with others to regulating one's own emotions and helping others. The duty of a healthcare professional is to possess empathy for the patient's problems and to be a person whom they can trust. To respect their rights, religious and moral principles, to acknowledge their opinions and beliefs, and to maintain professional confidentiality. Only in this way will successfully delivered healthcare not be lacking. Empathy in healthcare should be standard practice.





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