

Communicating about Health

Health Communication & CMS



Department of

Communication Studies

Moody College of Communication THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

A National Focus on Health Communication

- “Communication is increasingly understood to be at the root of many of health care's failures—and a leading culprit in rising costs.”
- In 2012, the federal Medicare program implemented financial penalties for hospitals where doctor communication skills were rated poorly

Landro, L. (2013, April 8). The talking cure for health care. *The Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323628804578346223960774296.htm>

Health Communication at UT

- Creation of a medical college at UT
- Moody College of Communication has hired a Founding Director for a Center for Health Communication
- Scientific advances and an aging population create increased needs for the study of how we communicate about health issues in many different contexts

Why does health communication matter?

IT AFFECTS PATIENT BEHAVIOR:

- When physicians are trained to communicate more skillfully, patients are more likely to adhere to their treatment regimens.

Haskard Zolknierek, K. B., & DiMatteo, M. R. (2009). Physician communication and patient adherence to treatment: A meta-analysis. *Medical Care*, 47, 826-834. doi: 10.1097/MLR.0b013e31819a5acc

Why does health communication matter?

IT AFFECTS PATIENT UNDERSTANDING:

- A recent study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* demonstrated that a majority of patients with terminal metastatic cancer did not realize that the chemotherapy they were receiving for pain relief would absolutely not cure their cancer.

Weeks, J. C., Catalano, P. J., Cronin, A., Finkelman, M. D., Mack, J. W., Keating, N. L., & Schrag, D. (2012). Patients' expectations about effects of chemotherapy for advanced cancer. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 367, 1616-1625.

Why does health communication matter?

IT AFFECTS PUBLIC HEALTH:

- A primary reason why parents decide not to follow CDC-recommended vaccination schedules for their children is because of conversations with family and friends who say that vaccines are unnecessary or harmful.

Brunson, E. K. (2013). The impact of social networks on parents' vaccination decisions. *Pediatrics*, 131, e1397-e1404. doi: 10.1542/peds.2012-2452

Why does health communication matter?

IT AFFECTS HEALTHCARE COSTS:

- Poor physician communication and complaints about the physician-patient relationship are key factors in most malpractice lawsuits.

Adamson, T. E., Tschann, J. M., Gullion, D. S., & Oppenberg, A. A. (1989). Physician communication skills and malpractice claims: A complex relationship. *The Western Journal of Medicine*, 150, 356-360.

Virshup, B. B., Oppenberg, A. A., & Coleman, M. M. (1999). Strategic risk management: Reducing malpractice claims through more effective patient-doctor communication. *American Journal of Medical Quality*, 14(4), 153-159. doi: 10.1177/106286069901400402

Why does health communication matter?

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE LINKED TO HEALTH:

- Physical wounds (e.g., blisters) heal more slowly in people who experience hostile marital interactions.

Gouin, J. P., Carter, C. S., Pournajafi-Nazarloo, H., Glaser, R., Malarkey, W. B., Loving, T. J., ... & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2010). Marital behavior, oxytocin, vasopressin, and wound healing. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 35, 1082-1090.

Why does health communication matter?

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS ARE LINKED TO MORTALITY:

- Married people are less likely to die from cancer. Even after statistically adjusting for known confounders, the survival benefit of marriage is stronger than the survival benefit of chemotherapy.

Aizer, A. A., et al. (2013). Marital status and survival in patients with cancer. *Journal of Clinical Oncology* (early online edition). doi: 10.1200/JCO.2013.49.6489

Why does health communication matter?

WE NEED TO DO BETTER:

- Many patients do not ask their most important question until the consultation is almost over (called a “doorknob question”).
- Some research indicates that fewer than half of patients bring up their main concern at all.

Baker, L. H., O'Connell, D., & Platt, F. W. (2005). “What else?”: Setting the agenda for the clinical interview. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 143, :766-770. doi:10.7326/0003-4819-143-10-200511150-00033

Health Communication Research

- ◎ Primary topics:

- > Health information
- > Public health campaigns
- > Patient-provider interaction
- > Social support
- > Healthy and unhealthy relationships
- > Impact of illness on interpersonal interactions
- > Healthcare and new communication technologies

Health Communication Research

- UT is a member of the **Coalition for Health Communication**



Health Communication Research in Communication Studies

- Professor Erin Donovan: How do people communicate about sensitive topics and confusing information while coping with major life stressors such as cancer?
- Professor Matthew McGlone: How to persuade people to make healthy choices?
- Professor René Dailey: What kind of family climate improves communication about weight management?

Health Communication Research in Communication Studies

- Professor Anita Vangelisti: How do physical pain relievers (aspirin, etc.) affect the ability to communicate emotional pain?
- Professor Keri Stephens: How can organizations use social media to encourage people to learn about cancer and its prevention?—and—How can health clinics partner with businesses to improve employee health choices?

Health Communication Research in Communication Studies

- Professor Jay Bernhardt (Founding Director of the Center for Health Communication):
How does digital information technology including mobile phones and devices, social media and networks, and electronic medical records affect health assessment, health interventions, and health outcomes?

Health Communication Education

- Communication training is becoming a more essential component of undergraduate pre-health studies and professional graduate programs
- More and more medical schools are incorporating “people skills” assessments into their applicant screening processes and curricula
- In 2015, the revised MCAT will include a section on social and behavioral determinants of health

Health Communication Teaching

- CMS courses address fundamental processes that make up health communication:
 - Relationship building and maintaining is what interpersonal communication is all about
 - Language matters, whether it be in instructions people receive from caregivers or in how healthcare products or services are marketed
 - Adherence is all about persuasion skills
 - Effective listening and empathy are emphasized
 - Digital technologies for assessment and interventions

Family Communication

- Many behaviors associated with health (e.g., dietary habits, drug and alcohol use) originate in and are maintained by the family.

CMS 357: Family Communication

Prof. Anita Vangelisti

Family Communication

- The majority of adolescents want information from their parents about risky behaviors, but do not feel able to talk openly with them.
- Adolescent drug use is predicted by parent-child communication patterns during conversations that are not about drugs.

Relational Communication

- Supportive (and unsupportive) communication in personal relationships is associated with a multitude of outcomes ranging from depression to recovery times after heart attacks to mortality.

CMS 358: Communication and Personal Relationships

Prof. Anita Vangelisti & Prof. René Dailey

CMS 330: Interpersonal Health Communication

Prof. Erin Donovan

Nonverbal Communication

- At least 1/2 of messages during interpersonal communication are conveyed nonverbally.
- Effective nonverbal communication increases rapport between patients and healthcare providers, which enhances the accuracy of the information transmitted, and increases patient engagement in their care.

CMS 334K: Nonverbal Communication

Prof. René Dailey

Doctor-Patient Communication

- Older adults whose healthcare providers use “elderspeak” (i.e., calling them “dear” or “sweetie”) are at greater risk for depression and cognitive decline.

CMS 330: Interpersonal Health Communication

Prof. Erin Donovan

Communication Skills Training

- Clarity of communication
- Handling stereotypes
- Building credibility
- Influencing others
- Managing conflict
- Dealing with power in relationships
- Overcoming shyness and feelings of stigma

CMS 315M: Interpersonal Communication Theory, Prof. John Daly

CMS 354: Conflict Mediation, Prof. Madeline Maxwell

CMS 332K: Theories of Persuasion, Prof. Matthew McGlone & Prof. Erin Donovan

CMS 330: Interpersonal Health Communication, Prof. Erin Donovan

Student projects emerging from our classes (Prof Donovan)

- One group of students presented their project on communication about HIV prevention at a Texas Department of State Health Services conference. They made a comic book that depicted ways to have successful, non-stigmatizing conversations about safe sex practices. The public health folks were absolutely thrilled.

Student projects emerging from our classes (Prof Donovan)

- One former student decided to double major in biology and CMS because he wants to become a family physician. He completed an undergraduate honors thesis under Prof Donovan's supervision on communication skills training in medical schools.
- A team of undergraduates studied ways to improve medical informed consent practices.

Digital Health Communication (Professor Bernhardt)

- Information and communication technology, including new and social media and mobile devices, are revolutionizing healthcare and public health and changing the ways that professionals, patients, and consumers create and share health information.
- The purpose of this course is to help prepare the next generation of communication and health professionals with the knowledge, abilities, and skills to understand and apply information and communication technologies to health communication programs and interventions.

Career Opportunities

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the healthcare sector has continued to grow even during recent years when jobs were lost in almost all other industries.

Career Opportunities

- Physician
- Nurse
- Health Educator
- School Health Care Administrator
- Healthcare Attorney
- Medical Grants Writer
- Hospital Administrator
- Hospital Communication Director
- Clinic Public Relations Director
- Public Health Advisor
- Health Communication Analyst
- Health Campaign Strategist
- Research Analyst
- Medical Training Supervisor
- Medical Publications Editor
- Science Correspondent
- Hospice Manager
- Patient Advocate
- Patient Navigator
- Health Care Counselor
- Social Worker
- Doula