

23rd BSMCON

Patient Counselling

Md Shafiqul Bari
Professor of Medicine
Dhaka Medical College



Outline

- Consultation, counselling, communication skill -----
- Key aspects of communication skill
- Conditions where counselling is needed
- Aims of counselling
- Styles of counselling
- Type of questions asked during counselling
- Steps of counselling
- Barriers of counselling
- How to overcome barriers?
- Techniques for specific situations
- OSCE
- Quiz

Consultation

The **entire process of interaction** between a patient and a doctor in the privacy of a room

- Initial welcome
- History taking
- Examination
- Investigation
- Assessment
- Management
- Advice
- Follow up
- Referral (if needed)

Counselling

Part of the management in the consultation process. It is an **interactive process** between a counselor and a patient during which

- **Information is exchanged**
- Helps him to **understand the true nature of the problem**
- Support is provided so that patient **designs a plan** and acts to improve their health

Communication Skill

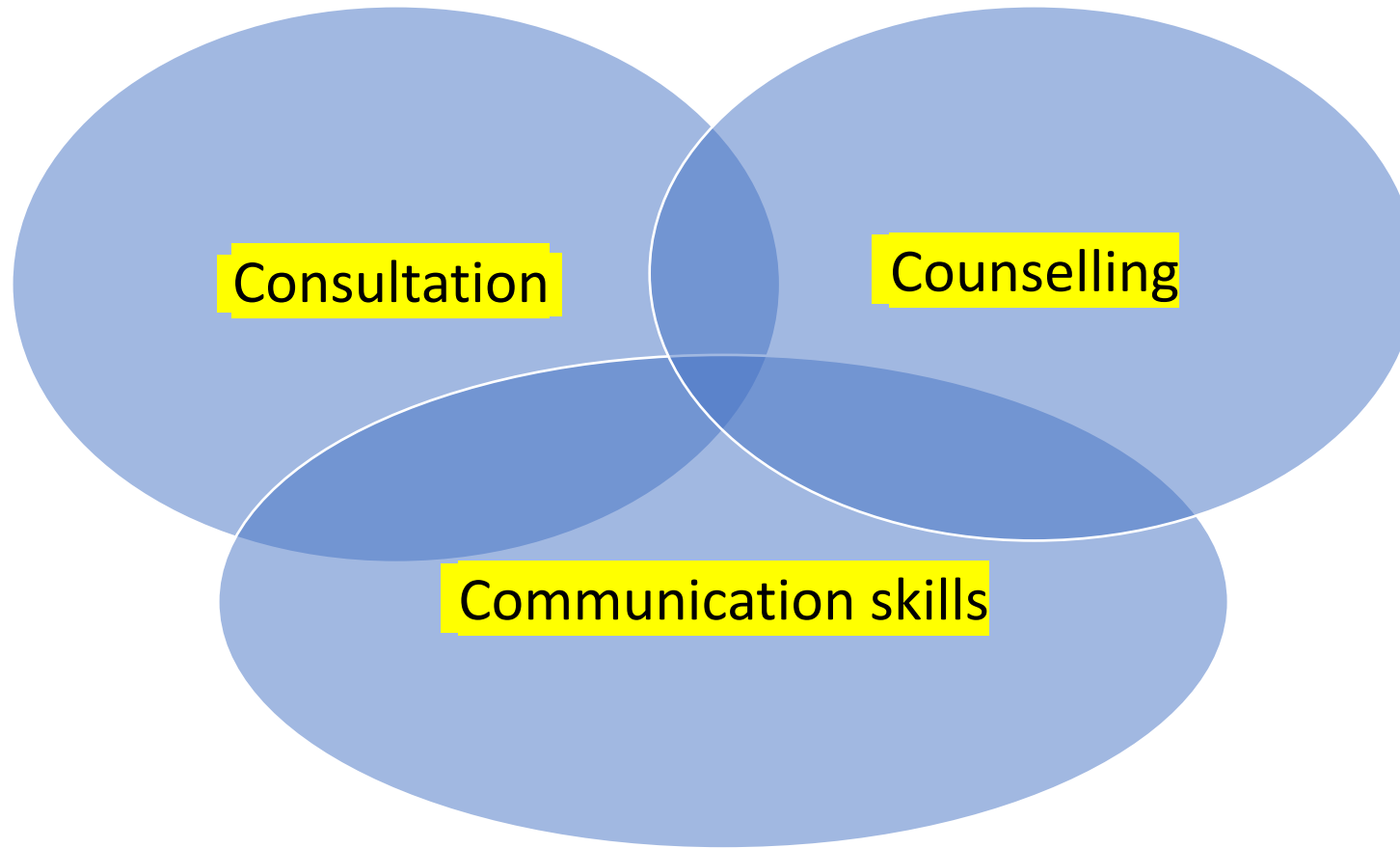
- Communication skill is a **dynamic process** which involves an **exchange of information** between two parties to convey thoughts or feelings
- It plays a pivotal role in building trust with patients

Counselling Vs Psychotherapy

Counselling	Psychotherapy
It is used with normal individuals	It is used with those who are severely disturbed
It is educational & informational	It is being done with strategic methods & facilities

Counselling & health education

Counselling	Health education
Confidential	Not confidential
One to one process or a small group	For a group of people
Focused, specific and goal directed	Generalized
Facilitates change in attitude & motivates behaviour change	Information is provided to increase the knowledge
Problem oriented	Content oriented
Based on needs of client	Based on public health needs



- Consultation skills = Communication skills + Clinical skills
- Communication skills (Verbal 40% and Non-verbal 60%)
- Clinical skills = Examination + Procedure

Key aspects of communication skill

- Clear and concise communication
 - ✓ Use simple language and **avoid medical jargon** when communicating with patients
 - ✓ **Clearly explain** medical conditions, treatment plans, and potential outcomes
 - ✓ Check for **patient understanding** by asking them to repeat information in their own words
- Active listening
 - ✓ Pay close **attention** to patients and their concerns
 - ✓ Demonstrate **empathy** by acknowledging emotions and validating patients' experiences
 - ✓ Avoid **interrupting** and give patients ample time to express themselves

- Non-verbal communication

- ✓ Be aware of your **body language**, **facial expressions**, and **gestures**
- ✓ Maintain **eye contact** to show attentiveness and sincerity
- ✓ Ensure your **posture** conveys openness and approachability

- Empathy and compassion

- ✓ **Understand** and **acknowledge** the emotional aspects of the illness
- ✓ Show genuine concern for patient's well-being
- ✓ Use empathetic statements to convey understanding and support

- Cultural competence

- ✓ Be sensitive to **cultural differences** and diverse backgrounds
- ✓ Respect individual **values and beliefs**, adapting communication style accordingly

- Team communication

- ✓ Effectively communicate with **other healthcare professionals** to ensure coordinated care
- ✓ Provide clear and concise **handovers** to colleagues during shift changes

- Informed consent
 - **Clearly explain** medical procedures, risks, and benefits to patients
 - Obtain informed consent in a language and format that the patient understands
 - **Document** the consent process in the medical record
- Patient education
 - Provide **educational materials** in a format accessible to the patient
 - Encourage **questions** and address any concerns
 - Use **visual aids** or multimedia tools to enhance understanding
- Conflict resolution
 - **Address conflicts** or disagreements with patients or colleagues calmly & professionally
 - **Seek solutions** that prioritize patient well-being

Conditions where counselling is needed

- New diagnosis
- Chronic diseases
- Medication management
- Pre & post surgery
- Pregnancy & childbirth
- Mental health conditions
- End-of-life care
- Health behaviour Change
- Infectious diseases
- Rehabilitation
- Genetic counselling
- Substance abuse & addiction
- Nutritional counselling
- Adolescent health
- Traumatic events

Aims of Counselling

Clear understanding (medical conditions, treatment options, importance of adherence to prescribed medications & follow-up)

Empowerment of patients by involving them in the decision-making process

Addressing concerns, misconceptions & questions about their health and treatment

Patient counseling aims to promote positive behavioral changes related to lifestyle

It provides psychosocial support by addressing

- ✓ Emotional and psychological aspects of illness
- ✓ Helping patients cope with stress, anxiety, and depression

Prevention and Health Promotion

- It extends beyond the treatment of existing conditions & also focuses on preventive measures and health promotion (vaccinations, screenings, and lifestyle modifications)

Establish trust between healthcare providers and patients

It involves not only managing symptoms and treating diseases but also it enhances quality of life

Styles of counselling

Directive	Non-directive	Eclectic (selective)/combination
Counselor-centered	Patient/ client-centered	Alternating between patient-centered and counselor-centered styles
Counselor directs the patient	Allows the patient to tell his story in his own way	Client-specific (Tailored according to situation and client) experience
Not a good style of counselling	Stress on emotional element and development of insight	Needs experience

Type of questions asked during counselling

Open ended	Midway	Closed ended
Requires more than one word to answer	Directional statements: to make counselling organized	Can be answered in only one word or a very short phrase (Yes/no)
Help to build rapport and explore emotions. Encourage patients to express themselves in detail	Guide the conversation & bridge gap between open-ended & closed questions	Typically elicit short, specific answers

Why you are here today?

Can you explain to me what do you mean by abnormal urination?

Do you have fever?

Counselors need to use a combination of these question types to create a dynamic and effective therapeutic dialogue

Steps of counselling

- Establish rapport
 - Introduce yourself and create a comfortable and open environment
 - Use open body language
 - Maintain eye contact
- Assessment of patient understanding
 - Assess the patient's level of health literacy and understanding of their condition
 - Ask open-ended questions to gauge their knowledge and perceptions about their health

- Active listening
 - Pay close attention to the patient's concerns, feelings, and questions
 - Use reflective listening to demonstrate empathy and understanding
- Provide information
 - Clear and accurate information about the patient's diagnosis, treatment options, and prognosis
 - Use layman's terms and avoid medical jargon, ensuring the information is easily understandable

- Discuss treatment options
 - Available treatment options, including potential benefits, risks, and alternatives
 - Collaborate with the patient to make decisions that align with their values, preferences, and lifestyle
- Address concerns and questions
 - Encourage patients to express their concerns and ask questions
 - Provide honest and transparent answers, acknowledging uncertainties when necessary

- Demonstrate medication management
 - Explain the prescribed medications, including dosage, administration instructions, and potential side effects
 - Use visual aids, written materials, or other resources to enhance understanding
- Promote lifestyle changes
 - Discuss and encourage healthy lifestyle modifications, such as diet, exercise, and stress management
 - Provide practical tips and resources to support these changes

- Set realistic expectations
 - Manage patient expectations regarding treatment outcomes and recovery.
 - Discuss potential challenges and strategies for coping with them
- Develop a follow-up plan
 - Establish a plan for follow-up appointments, monitoring, and ongoing communication
 - Provide contact information for questions or concerns that may arise between appointments

- Document the interaction
 - Record key points discussed during the counseling session in patient's medical record
 - Document any agreements or plans made, as well as the patient's understanding and consent
- Follow-up communication
 - After the counseling session, follow up with the patient through phone calls, emails, or secure messaging to address any additional questions or concerns
 - Reinforce key information discussed during the counseling session

- Remember that patient counseling is a dynamic process that may require ongoing communication and adjustment based on the patient's needs and progress
- Tailoring the counseling approach to each patient's unique circumstances is essential for effective healthcare delivery

Barriers to communication/counselling in clinical practice

- Stigma
 - Social stigma
 - ✓ Others' attitudes and beliefs about mental health and seeking counselling can contribute to a sense of shame or embarrassment
 - Self-stigma
 - ✓ Individuals may feel ashamed about their own mental health leading to reluctance in seeking counselling
- Cultural and diversity barriers
 - Cultural mismatch
 - ✓ Differences in cultural backgrounds between the counselor and the patient can affect the therapeutic relationship and understanding of issues
 - Language barriers
 - ✓ Limited proficiency in the counselor's language can impede effective communication & comprehension

- Financial barriers
 - Cost of services
- Accessibility
 - Geographic accessibility (limited availability, especially in rural areas)
 - Transportation
 - ✓ Lack of reliable transportation can hinder individuals from attending counseling sessions
- Lack of awareness
 - Knowledge gap (may not be aware of benefits of counselling or recognize signs of mental health issues)
- Time constraints
 - Busy schedules to allocate time for counselling sessions

- Trust and relationship concerns
 - Trust in the counselor
 - ✓ Past negative experiences or a lack of trust can be a barrier
- Severity of Issues
 - Some individuals may deny the severity of their problems, making it difficult for them to acknowledge the need for counseling
 - Individuals in crisis may struggle to engage in counseling due to the overwhelming nature of their immediate challenges

How to overcome barriers?

- Establishing trust
 - By demonstrating empathy, understanding, and genuine concern
 - By maintaining confidentiality
- Cultural sensitivity
 - Be aware of and respect cultural differences
 - Educate yourself about the cultural backgrounds of your clients to avoid misunderstandings

- Communication skills
 - Develop strong communication skills to convey information clearly and encourage clients to express themselves openly
 - Use active listening techniques, paraphrasing, and reflecting to enhance understanding
- Overcoming resistance
 - Acknowledge and explore resistance rather than confront it
 - Help clients identify and understand their resistance and work collaboratively to address underlying concerns

- Managing emotional barriers
 - Create a safe and supportive environment for clients to express their emotions
 - Teach coping strategies and emotional regulation techniques to help clients manage intense emotions
- Addressing stigma
 - Educate clients about importance of mental health and challenge stigmatizing beliefs
- Flexibility and adaptability
 - Be flexible in your approach, adapting counselling techniques to suit individual needs and preferences
 - Adjust your communication style and interventions based on the client's comfort level

- Client Involvement
 - Involve clients in the goal-setting and decision-making process
 - Empower clients by encouraging them to participate in their own therapeutic journey actively
- Providing psychoeducation
 - Offer information about mental health conditions, therapeutic approaches, and coping mechanisms to increase client understanding
- Continuous professional development
 - Stay informed about the latest developments in counseling and psychotherapy
 - Attend training sessions and workshops to enhance your skills and knowledge

Techniques for specific situations

Breaking bad news

Find out what the patient already knows or suspects

Do you have any idea as to the nature of your illness?

Assess gap between the patient's expectation & reality

Would you like to know the details of the illness?

If patient suspects the worst (gap between expectation and reality is narrow)

Gently confirm his fears. The biopsy report confirms our suspicion that the tumour is cancer

If the gap between expectation and reality is wide

- ✓ Provide a warning
- ✓ Ask if the patient wants to know the details
- ✓ Proceed to give the information if the patient indicates that he is interested
- ✓ Ask the patient if he/she is keen to know more

- ✓ The biopsy report is not as good as we had hoped for

Allow time to absorb information

Encourage the patient to express feelings

The diagnosis must have come as a shock to you, and I can see that you are upset

Clarify any doubts, misconceptions and fears

I realize that it is difficult for you to accept the diagnosis. Would you like any clarifications?

Briefly state the management plan in simple language

We plan to give you strong medicines to treat cancer. Though treatment will make you sick, it is worth it as the chances of remission are good

Provide details if the patient wants to know

Do you have any doubts or need any further clarification?

State that you are available for further clarification. Give a definitive appointment for the patient and relatives if so desired

You might want to bring a relative along on your next visit and I can discuss the issues again. That way you won't be alone in making decisions. If at any time you would like to know more about your illness or treatment, you can ask me.

Steps in managing an angry subject

Acknowledge that the person is angry or upset

I can see that you are angry and upset

Explore the reasons for such emotion

Tell me what has upset you

Permit them to be angry or upset

I can see that you have reason to feel this way

Admit responsibility and apologize if the subject's grievance is genuine

I am sorry, I did not realize that you had to wait so long to be seen.

Communication & Consultation/counseling skill (OSCE)

A: Done well, B: Partially done, C: Not done

Domain	Subdomain	A	B	C
Introduction	Shake hands. Ask the person to sit down by indicating a chair			
	Smile and greet the patient by his name			
	Make eye contact & introduce yourself warmly			
	Establish a rapport by asking a simple open-ended question			
Data gathering	Patient's main problems			
	Patients' idea, concern & expectation			
	Physical, emotional, & social impact of the patient's problems on the patient & family			
	Any ongoing problem?			
	Appropriate physical examination			
Main communication skills	Use a good mix of open-ended & closed-ended questions			
	Listen actively - pay attention to what he or she says & do not interrupt			
	Maintain appropriate eye contact			
	Give verbal and non-verbal feedback to ease the flow of the exchange			

Domain	Sub domain	A	B	C
	Silences; allow thinking and reflection.			
	Aim to encourage emotional expression			
	Clarifying, paraphrasing			
	Ask for clarification if he/she not sure, to guarantee shared understanding.			
	Respect their views about the illness and develop a shared understanding upon which to base intervention.			
Summary	Summarize the whole plan of action			
	Give a chance to ask			
	Shared management plan			
	Agree on a time for a follow-up			
	Opportunistic health promotion			
	Thank and escort him to the door			

Conclusion

- Patient counselling plays a pivotal role in modern healthcare, contributing significantly to the overall quality of patient care and treatment outcomes
- It empowers individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to actively participate in their healthcare decisions
- It is a dynamic process that may require ongoing communication and adjustment based on the patient's needs and progress
- Tailoring the counseling approach to each patient's unique circumstances is essential for effective healthcare delivery

Questions

1. Which of the following can only be done with a specialized provider?

- a) Health education b) Counselling c) Psychotherapy

Answer: c

2. Which of the following styles of counselling is counselor-centered?

- a) Directive b) Non-directive c) Eclectic

Answer: a

3. Which type of questions the doctor should start with during taking the history

- a) Closed-ended b) Open-ended c) Directional

Answer: b

A photograph of a two-lane asphalt road with white dashed center lines and solid white edge lines. The road leads straight towards a steep, exposed brown earth cliff face. The cliff is topped with a green grassy hillside. To the left of the road, there is a silver metal guardrail and a line of bare trees in the background. To the right, there is a grassy embankment with some dry, yellowish grass. The sky is a pale, clear blue. The text "The End" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image, positioned over the cliff face.

The End

