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Book Review

Name of the Book: Health Communication: Theory and Practice

Written by: Dr. Dianne Berry

Published by: Open University Press (England), Year of Publication: 2006

Price: \$ 43.73, Number of Pages: 152

Reviewed By:

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About the book: The book is all about the various *interpersonal* communication processes amongst the different participants in a healthcare setup, viz. between healthcare professionals and patients, healthcare professionals and patient's families, other healthcare professionals and patient's families, healthcare professionals amongst themselves, etc. In various diverse situations, how to overcome the barriers of communication and to communicate effectively amongst the participants in different healthcare setups by properly understanding the psychological states of the intended audience in a healthcare setup to obtain better health outcomes –these issues are discussed elaborately with examples in this book. This book also refers to some health promotional strategies which are designed with the help of media tools or networks that help disseminating health related information to aware the target audience and influence their health behaviours. My first impression about the book was that it would talk more on various communication processes, both verbal and non-verbal, that take place in the environments involving health issues.

Summary of the book: This book completely focuses on the *interpersonal* and *intrapersonal* communication related to health among the patients and doctors, doctors and patient's families, patient's families and other healthcare professionals, and lastly, doctors and healthcare professionals in a healthcare setup. It states that communication has now become central not only to the human health issues but also it has been an essential component of civilizations, people being a part of the society. The occurrence of communication problems in a health care set up creates patient's anxiety and dissatisfaction, which may lead to negative health outcomes. Alternatively, better communication approaches have positive impacts on health outcomes.

This book talks about different forms of communication and guiding theories, which helps in explaining the necessary communication approaches with different types of patients

that are encountered by the healthcare professionals in different kinds of situations in healthcare setups. Patients' health behaviours are of different types depending upon their personal backgrounds, health beliefs, socio-economic & cultural conditions, past experiences, educational levels, etc. The health behaviours of the patients also vary according to their age groups, intellectual level of maturity and individual attitudes.

In the seventh chapter of this book, the issues related to health promotions and communications with the wider public are discussed in broader ways, and at the same time, health education and promotions in schools, workplaces, etc. are also advocated. Health promotion strategies and its approaches are duly highlighted in this book. The importance of media tools in disseminating health related information to the patients effectively, and related ethical issues are apparent here. At the last chapter, it is said that the doctors along with the other healthcare professionals should be provided with proper trainings on health communication skills so as to enable them in performing effective and result oriented health communication, and to achieve the desired positive health outcomes. In addition, the patients should also be provided with some kinds of basic trainings of communication, which will help them in effectively communicating their ideas and clearly expressing their health behaviours to the healthcare professionals in order to help the healthcare professionals to treat them in right directions.

My comments on the book: The book is very much relevant to the present day context of healthcare setup in countries like India. People most often express their dissatisfaction on the non-clarity of ideas in the interpersonal communications between the healthcare professionals and the patients, mainly the Doctors, which may be due to various factors—details of which are discussed in this book. The book talks about not only the ways of communication between patients and healthcare professionals, but also it equally focuses on the communication processes amongst the healthcare professionals themselves in healthcare setups. The different skills that are to be acquired by the participants of health communication are duly addressed in this book. However, the book also carries much about various theories that guide the interpersonal communication process in healthcare setups. The theories could have been explained with more practical examples which would have helped more to the readers including the general audience in properly understanding the situations in more practical and befitting manner by relating those issues to the personal experiences in their day to day lives.

Concluding remarks: The book may be used as a reference or text book in the medical education institutions, which will create more awareness amongst the health practitioners as to why and how to understand the psychology of the patients & their family members, and the different ways to deal with them very effectively in any kind of adverse situations too. Of late, there is an independent emerging discipline, namely **Health Communication**, wherein Diploma and Post Graduate level degree programmes are offered in number of institutions in the developed countries, and in a few institutions in India. The already employed healthcare professionals may also use this book in their professions which will help them to achieve better health outcomes in their professional careers.