

Session 6

Healthcare Professional Family Relationship and Patient- Family Relationships

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Introduction

In your sociology lessons, you might have learned the definition of the family. Accordingly, a family refers to a group of individuals who are related by means of blood, marriage, or by adoption. These individuals are interacting and inter-dependent, having common human bonds and goals, sharing resources and living space. The ties of blood, love and care of a family can build generations together into a supportive, safe and nurturing unit.

The patient who is admitted to the ward could be a father, who is the bread winner or the income generator of the family. It could also be the mother who is supporting the family income equally. As the mother, she plays

several other roles such as, care giver, nurse, teacher, and facilitator etc. She could also be a grandmother on elderly parent caring for children or some other individual. Each and every person has a specific place within the family. If one member is sick, all the others are affected in various capacities. As a result of interaction and communication within the family, they know and understand one another better than anybody else. Once the patient is admitted to the hospital, others have much to talk about him/her. As a healthcare professional you also need to know the patient and some other information relevant to the patient. In this regard, you need to communicate with the family. Therefore, developing a good relationship with the family members is essential.

It is not possible to think of a patient in isolation because he/ she is a member of a family. In sociology lessons, you have learned that a family is the smallest unit of the society. A patient is one of the members of that smallest unit. Session six of this course also discussed the importance of the family as the key role in a patient's recovery.

Could you imagine the kind of relationship, exists between the patient and the family? Do you know how to identify the level of the patient's existing relationship with family members? Different levels of bonds within the family and behaviours of individual family members lead to different types of patient-family relationships. By observing the behaviour of family members towards the patient as well, the behaviour of the patient towards family members during visiting times, you can get a picture of the existing differences among the members. Who visit the patient regularly? Who has the keenest interest in the patient? For whom the patient is waiting to meet. Finding answers to these questions will help you to gather much information regarding the family ties of a patient.

Regarding communication within the family, family members are used to interact with one another through continuous communication. In this session, you will learn about the relationship between the patient and the rest of the members of the family in the presence of an illness. Further you will learn about the possible changes that occur within the family structure due to an illness, barriers to maintain the harmony of the relationship, and the patterns of communication that exist within a family. Identifying these is essential to provide better care, recovery and rehabilitation.

6.1 Patient and the Family

A family provides physical, social and psychological security for its members. Usually, families within the Sri Lankan context belong to Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, and a few other ethnic groups, that have strong family bonds among their respective members. This is something different from some other societies in the west. Physically, the father and the mother provide financial security and other basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, education and spiritual guidance and many other requirements for all the family members.

Psychologically, the family supports its members by providing emotional warmth, love and care for one another which help them to overcome the stress during hardships. Therefore, relationships among the family members are an important ongoing process based on the fulfilment of needs of each and every family member. Family support includes the genuineness, warmth and respect for one another. These emotional supports of the family for its members are very essential in managing day-to-day stress.

When a member of a family becomes ill, all the others are affected. Taking care of a person who is sick and staying at home creates a new agenda for the other family members. Their routine way of living and other social

activities get disturbed. As a result, every family member may get some additional work to do. If the sick member got admitted to a health care facility, the situation may become worse. In addition to the additional work within the family, they need to pay visits and take care of other things such as providing various things and requirements for the patient while managing their requirements at home, which consume more time and money than usual.

The family would like to learn the kind of support necessary to provide for patient's recovery. They may not have the knowledge about the illness, the therapy and/ or the care after discharge from the ward. They may be happy to listen to the advices from healthcare professionals. Then the whole family could use their resources to support the patient to come out of the problem and during his/her rehabilitation. It is the healthcare professional who should provide the necessary health education for the family members. They may hesitate to question. However the healthcare professional must find an opportunity to educate them on aspects of health care.

As a family in an open system, changes of one part can affect another part of the system. Both the patient and the family have to cope with the stress caused by the illness. Therefore, the illness related stress could disturb the sound and comfortable routine and harmony within the family. As a result, every member has to adapt to some sort of changes in their roles and responsibilities towards the family. These have a great impact on the economy, daily routine, education, life style, transportation, and communication etc. With a temporary illness, it will be easy for the family to accept and adjust temporarily according to the situation. When it comes as a complicated and prolonged illness, the impact on the family could be very serious. In such situations, the spouse or any other responsible family member has to function more than the others. No matter what the patient did before becoming ill, he/she has to function less than others until he/she becomes alright.

Family members are important resources in health care. If you ignore family members, you will not be successful in providing care for your patients properly and effectively. Except with paediatric patients, extremely limited contact exists in health care settings between healthcare professionals and family members of the patient. Family members can play a very supportive role when healthcare professionals assess, diagnose, plan, implement care and during rehabilitation activities. Most of the time, family members can have a greater influence on patients in changing their negative health behaviours. They are the people who know the patient better than the healthcare professional does. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the patient. Therefore, they know how to influence the patient in changing his/her health related behaviours towards recovery.

All over the world, the current medical practice is to limit the patients' period of stay in acute care hospital. After discharge from the hospital, family members are the people who have to take the responsibility at maintaining the health of the patient towards positive health outcomes. Therefore, family members of the patient are the most important group in providing care for sick person. To be effective, there should be good communication between healthcare professionals and family members regarding the necessary care for patients. Benner (1984) stated that providing emotional support, opportunity to care and necessary information will help the family members in providing physical care for their patients. In this manner, the healthcare professionals can develop positive feelings in family members for an early recovery of their patient.

6.2 Healthcare Professional and Family Members

Benner (1984) stated that the family is an important source to the patient's recovery. In order to get the family in supporting their patient's recovery, the healthcare professional should provide emotional and informational support through communication. The "illness" may be a sudden,

unexpected one or a gradual deterioration of health of the individual. Whatever way it occurs, at the time of admission the patient as well as the family members are under stress due to the illness. The experience of illness, the extent of the bond among individuals, the impact of the illness on the individual's life are the causes that may influence this stress. The patient as well as the family members are in a sort of helpless situation. When the stress is more, the family members are not capable of supporting patients or the health care team members. The family may become restless easily and they expect support from health-care team members. It is the healthcare professionals' duty to help them to understand the condition of the illness and the support they could give to bring the patient towards a speedy recovery.

In such a situation, family members expect maximum support from the health care team members. They may or may not ask for information verbally. Remember what Benner (1984) stated about emotional support, opportunity to care and providing information to speed up the recovery of the patient. Healthcare professionals stay with the patient most of the time during the stay in the hospital. It is a common complaint that healthcare professionals do not respond adequately. They do not answer questions. Above all, they are very busy. Hence they are unable to spare time to talk with family members and other visitors. They are not available during visiting hours. Have you ever thought of such a situation? If the patient is having only a physical illness at least, family members can talk with the patient. Think of a situation when it comes to a patient with a mental illness. How helpless will the family members be?



Activity 1

When you visit a patient in a private hospitals observe the relationship maintained by healthcare professionals working in that place. Similarly, visit another patient admitted to a government hospital. Observe how healthcare professionals maintain relationship with patients and visitors.

1. Write the similarities between the two groups you have observed?
2. What are the differences identified between the two groups in the two settings?
3. Who communicated better than the other?
4. What could be the reasons for them to behave in that manner?
5. Justify your answers with examples.

When they visit the patient in the hospital, family members wants to know about the changes and the health related information about the patient. They expect for an early recovery. As they are not health care professionals, their understanding of the illness is very poor. Educated families may refer text books or may search the Internet for additional information about the illness. Generally, most of the families are not like that. They expect direct information from healthcare professionals. Although they may not ask verbally but may give messages through expressions. How much attention do healthcare professionals pay to understand such non-verbal messages that indicate needs of family members?

After seeing the busy hospital environment and busy healthcare professionals, the family members may be reluctant to ask questions or to offer their support and suggestions. Even if they ask, those may be limited to one or two questions. However, they expect more information from healthcare professionals. Since they consider healthcare professionals as knowledgeable professionals, they believe that the patient will receive the necessary care and proper attention. In addition, family members want to know more about the illness, the treatment regimen, prognosis, and post hospitalization care. Added to that are their personal feelings and concerns related to the illness and hospitalization, increased stress levels etc. These are essential factors that need to be discussed with the family members.

In this sense, one cannot ignore family members when caring for patients. We should consider the patient as a part of the family system. When caring for the patient, healthcare professionals need to look for family concerns. In order to get the maximum support from family members in patient care, effective communication is very important.

6.3 Changes within the Relationship

Northhouse and Northhouse (1992) discussed two problems that can occur in a relationship. The first one is the disruption of the roles of family members. The second one is the changes of the patterns of communication existing within the family. Health care professionals need to know about these changes because they are the group of health care team members who stay with the patient round-the-clock. In order to support the patient and the family, healthcare professionals need to know these possible changes within the family.

6.3.1 Disruption of the Roles of Family Members

To adapt to the changes caused by an illness of a family member varies according to the role played by the member who has become ill. If the patient is the income generator of the family, every member of the family comes across with negative consequences on the economical aspects of the family. If the patient is the mother, the impact on the family could be different and may be more towards a disorganized home environment. However, there will be confusion within the family. Usually, each member knows what is his/her role, but not about others' roles. When one member is sick, others have to play their roles and some additional performances. Each of them may not know how and what the other one did. On the one hand in the middle of the confusion of performing the tasks, they are not in a position to contact the patient who performed these tasks. Therefore, ambiguity and uncertainty could occur easily. On the other hand, patient is

stressed for not being able to participate in the family routines. In addition to the illness related stress, the patient goes through the stress caused by the handicapped situation of inability to perform one's role within the family context. He/she know what others have to perform as their roles and the possible confusion over sharing his/her role. In the absence of the sick family member, others are compelled to do something additional.

As mentioned earlier, a mother's illness causes a more serious impact on the family than a father becoming ill. Usually, in the Sri Lankan context, the mother is the informal key player of the family. She knows all ins and outs, does most of the house hold work, and bears all the suffering which the father could not even imagine. She knows how to balance all these for the convenience of the other members in the family. If the father who is considered the "captain of the ship" becomes ill, mother knows how to "steer" and balance matters arising within the family as well as the stress caused by the illness. Although the father's illness carries some effects on the family, they are not as serious as when the mother becomes ill. However, one family member's illness results in over-functioning of other family members. But things are completely different when a child becomes ill. Both parents although fit and well get stressed more than when an elder person becomes sick. They become over concerned about the child. They want to do everything for the child even if it seems to be a problem to the child.

In this manner, a temporary illness of a family member has different impacts on the other depending upon the role played by the patient within the family unit. The role confusion inflicted on other family members varies according to the role and responsibilities of the patient. As a result, a disruption of the roles of family members can occur. When caring for patients who are admitted to a health care setting, health care professionals need to focus on how the roles have changed within the family and their impact on the

patient. The stresses caused by such factors have a strong impact on the patient's recovery.

If the illness is a complicated one or a terminal one such as a cancer the family members have to prepare themselves to face the worst. All may not be equally capable of functioning while tolerating the stress caused by the illness. In such a situation, breaking bad news itself is a very unpleasant experience. In addition, both the patient and the family members have to face the truth and need to participate in the care of a dying patient. Both parties need emotional support to live with the situation. It is the healthcare professionals who can encourage them, strengthen them, encourage them to accept the situation and face the reality.

Activity 2

1. Observe these three patients' interactions with their family members.
2. If possible, try to talk with them and see how they respond.
3. Try to understand the type of relationship.
4. Write notes in your journal about what you have learned.



6.3.2 Changes in the Patterns of Communication

Stress caused by illness, change the patterns of communication within the family. If the illness is not so serious, family members discuss matters within the family in a free manner. Still, they are concern with not adding more stresses to the person who is already bearing the stress of an illness. If the illness is serious, the communication becomes limited only to essential information. The pattern of communication tends to be more towards closed communication rather than an open interaction. This is also a barrier to a good patient-family relationship.

In a temporary illness situation family members use open communication. As the patients and the family know that there is nothing much to worry, no one tries to hide any details. They discuss the day-to-day problems and seek advice from the sick person regarding the role changes. If the patient is the mother or father this is the usual pattern. Formal and informal rules and norms within the family provide guidelines for this communication patterns. Accordingly, every family member knows whom to ask, how to ask or what or when to ask for such advice.

If the illness is a life-threatening one or terminal illness, the communication will become selective. Family members learn about the illness through various sources. They also may discuss certain things with health care team members. When it is time to communicate with the patient, family members tend to be more careful about what to talk. Only selected information will be communicated between them. Even among family members, the conversation becomes rather structured. They avoid or limit their discussions on bad news. They will be scared to talk about the reality. Instead, some of them wait for miracles to happen. They try to give hopes to one another as well as to the patient.

However, most of the patients are aware of what is going on around him/her. Even if the patients wanted to discuss about it, do not talk because they do not want family members to get disturbed. They may be having many worries hidden within themselves, which need to be discussed. Some patients may discuss their feelings with health care team members but not with family members. They pretend that everything will be alright. By doing so, both patients and family members try to protect others from emotional stress. Both parties do not find an opportunity to ventilate their feelings because of the unwillingness of accepting the truth; the deterioration of their patients' health.

Problems may arise within the family because of these patterns of closed communication. As family members and also the patients do not share the thoughts and feelings regarding the reality of life, the relationship will turn into a one with loneliness and isolation. In addition, both parties become irritable easily or depressed developing a barrier between them. As a result, when the patients need emotional support to face the reality, family members are not capable enough to provide the necessary encouragement. This is because family members are immersed in painful thoughts, desperation and frustration.

By maintaining closed communication and not talking about the illness, each party may be thinking that they have protected the other from being worried. But both parties may be crying secretly without letting the others to know. This is an unhealthy way of dealing with problems. When there is a high level of stress caused by an illness, it is very important to discuss their feelings. Then only they will be able to understand difficulties faced by others. Without knowing these, nobody could handle those situations and support the patient or the family member to cope with the stress. Other causes that blocks communication between a patient and the family is, over protection and/ or helping too much. After a heart attack, the family may be thinking that the patient should not do anything to exert him/ her and need to be supported. But the patient had been independent before the illness. When family members try to protect such a person and try to help in each and every activity, he/ she become angry or restless because the autonomy of that person is threatened. Family members need to be aware of these and prevent the development of a communication barrier between the patient and the family.

When there is open communication among the family members, they are capable of handling the health related stress caused by any type of illness. Such a family will not only be able to deal with the stress in a positive way

but also, to get the necessary support and information from the health care team members.



Activity 3

Talk with the family members of a terminally ill patient.

1. Try to understand their feelings towards their patient's illness and the prognosis.
2. Are they willing to discuss the illness with you or with the patient?
3. How do they feel?
4. Do they communicate their feelings with the patient? With others?
5. Write what you have observed and learned by observing their interaction.

6.4 Barriers to Maintain Good Healthcare Professional-Family Relationship

Good healthcare professional-family relationships mainly depend upon the extent of good communication. Communication is a two way process. There should be a sender and a receiver. When one side is inactive, communication may not take place in a successful way. Instead of direct communication with a healthcare professional, if the family members receive indirect communication through the patient or other co-workers, problems may arise.

When there is lack of understanding, the needs of the family member are ignored. It is a common habit of thinking that the patient is the one who needs help from the health-care team. The healthcare professional must remember that the family members also have needs to be fulfilled as same as the patient. Therefore the healthcare professional should provide the opportunity by encouraging family members to ventilate their feelings. This brings them towards healthcare professionals. This is very important because then he/ she will provide information without filtering. This will help the patient not only to have better support for early recovery but also

reducing the anxiety developed due to curiosity of being in an unfamiliar situation with an illness.

6.4.1 Contacts with Family Members

One of the barriers is lack of maintaining contacts with family members. As mentioned earlier a patient is a part of the family system. If healthcare professionals do not take this fact into consideration, there will be less or no contacts with family members. Exchange of ideas between the two groups (health care team members and family members) may not take place. Hospital environment is not a familiar one for both patient and family members. Initially, they are visitors to the place. They may hesitate to talk because they do not know to whom they should talk or what kind of questions they could ask. Therefore, healthcare professionals should move first to establish the relationship with the patient and family members. Most of the time, the behaviours of the family influenced by their stress may be misunderstood by healthcare professionals. Limited communication or lack of communication creates a difficult situation for everybody involved.

This communication gap is a barrier to develop and maintain healthcare professional- patient relationship. The healthcare professional have to take the lead to bridge this communication gap. If the healthcare professional offers help or express the interest of contacts with the patient and family members, they will all feel relieved. They will develop a sense that there is a person they could rely on, could trust, ask for help, willing to listen, a person with whom they could discuss their health related matters. As a healthcare professional, you need to develop this trusting, helping relationships with patients and their family members. Then they will also join with you to solve the health related problems of the patients. Since this is a strong, supportive/ collaborative relationship, achieving health care goals will become easy. Therefore, it is essential to maintain close contact with patients and their family members regarding health related matters.

Limited contacts with family members lead to barriers of “limited access to information”

6.4.2 Limited Access to Information

If there is a limited access to get health related information of the patient, the relationship may not become a strong one because this is a result of limited communication. When a patient is admitted to a hospital, family members wish to hear about the current situation of the health states of that individual. If they do not get information from the health-care team members as expected, they get disappointed. They will try other sources of information. They may ask the patient for the doctor’s opinion about the condition; discuss with the patient in the next bed; try to get information from co-workers; they further try to observe patients with similar health condition/ situation. This cannot be acceptable. Therefore, it is necessary to prevent such things. Without allowing them to search second hand information or indirect information, it is better if the healthcare professional help the family members to get rid of their curiosity and anxiety.



Activity 4

Think of a situation where you or one of your family members got admitted to a hospital.

1. What did you wanted to know about the health situation?
2. What information did you receive?
3. Was it adequate?
4. Were your needs adequately addressed?
5. Were there any unanswered questions?

When there is a communication gap, healthcare professionals as well as family members are unable to access information. Family members are inquisitive about the patient’s improvements or ongoing treatments or day-to-day recovery. Health care team members may need to know some historical data about the illness or some other information regarding the patient and the development of his/her illness. Family members may hide

some of the information related to the illness. As such, healthcare professionals may not be answered by family members as expected. Sometimes, healthcare professionals and /or family members may convey selected information to other family members regarding the patient. There is a possibility for those family members may have adequate information about the illness but not the patient. Especially, when it is a time to break bad news to the patient or family members, the whole health care team may select what to disclose and what not to disclose. This is unacceptable in relation to the patients' rights. The patient also has a right to know what is going on. When there is bad news, healthcare professionals use their communication skills to deliver the message. Informing the patient is better than not informing. When the patient is aware of the real situation, it will be easy to convince him/ her and the family members.

The responsibility of information is another important aspect that needs to be considered in relation to healthcare professional- family relationship. When the message or information is conveyed to a family member through a by-stander, the message will be distorted by the time it reaches the correct person. Then the correct message may not be delivered. The conveyed message will become distorted due to various reasons. The receiver might not have heard it properly; heard but not understood it clearly; heard and understood but forgot to convey the message; or it could be lack of concentration in delivering accurately. Therefore, it is necessary to ask for clarification from the person who received the information. Whether it is the healthcare professional, family member, the patient, or anybody else, in absence of clarification the communication is going to be a one-way communication.

Another important aspect is that the communication should be a direct communication rather than an indirect communication. Whatever the information given to the other should be taken care of by applying the skill in communication acquired as a professional.



Activity 5

Stand in a row. Write a message (consist of minimum of three sentences) in a piece of paper and give the same message verbally to the next person in the row. The message should be whispered in to the ear of the second person. The second person should whisper it to the third person in the row. Third to the fourth person, until the message is whispered to the last person.

1. Now let the last person to announce the message loudly. See what happens.
2. Compare that with the first person who gave the original message.
3. Have both messages given similar meanings or different meanings?
4. This is called a message on the grapevine

Now you have learned two barriers to develop healthcare professional-family relationship. First is the limited contact with health care team members and the second one is the inability to access necessary information. In order to remove these barriers, it is necessary to be available for family members and/ or patient to encourage, being supportive and increase understanding.

Healthcare professional family-relationship are a social interaction. With regard to communication, healthcare professionals need to think not only of verbal communication but also of non-verbal communication. As you are aware, non-verbal communication is more powerful than verbal communication. Through non-verbal communication, healthcare professionals can give the message that they are ready to support the patient as well as family members. When healthcare professionals do not communicate, the gap between the healthcare professional and the family members will be widened.

6.5 Breaking the Barrier

Open communication support family members to overcome the barriers that block the relationship between them. Some families are able to cope with illness related stress whereas, others who do not have ability to cope with stress. They remain frustrated, isolated, lonely and depressed. They are

unsupportive to one another as well as to the patient. Therefore, as a health care team member, you need to identify the families that are unable to cope with stress.

It is the responsibility of health care team members to assist families to cope with the stress caused by illness as well as with role disruption. Advise them on the importance of using open communication in supporting the patients to reach the expected goals of recovery. Open communication is the key to overcome the barriers within the family members. It will provide courage to the patient to accept the reality more than when one is healthy. Open communication is essential to reduce illness related anxiety.

As a healthcare professional you need to develop empathic understanding to recognize the problems of the patients. These will be given in the next few sessions. Empathic understanding is a very important skill that helps the health care team members to understand these illness related problems that develop within the family. With this understanding, you will be able to facilitate the relationships between a patient and his/her family members towards better health.

Activity 6

Think of a past situation in which one of your closed relative or a friend was diagnosed as having a serious illness.

1. How comfortable were you in discussing it?
2. What were your feelings?
3. How were the patient's feeling?
4. Have you tried to talk about it?
5. If yes, what has happened?
6. If no, what are the reasons?
7. Write a note discussing your feelings and how it relates to this lesson.



Now you have learned about different kinds of relationships that healthcare professionals have to face during their practice. You also learned the

importance of communication and the barriers to communication for maintaining those relationships. Communication skills are essential for healthcare professionals because they always have to interact with humans. Whether they are professionals or patients or non-professional, they are human beings. Each person has his/ her own pattern of communication. In order to deal with different situations, you need to develop good interpersonal relationships using communication skills. From the next lesson, you will learn more about the various aspects of communication, which will help you to develop good communication skills. Before ending this lesson, you would like to read this quotation of a famous writer and a poet.

“The reality of the other person is not what he reveals you, but in what he cannot reveal to you. Therefore, if you would understand him, listen not to what he says but rather to what he does not say”

Khalil Gibran

6.6 Developing Healthcare Professional- Family Relationship

Listening is very important in developing the relationship. If you do not show an interest to listen, it gives a non-verbal clue that “You are not a person who is ready to support the family or the member who is sick. Listen to them and give the non-verbal message that you are there to take care of them. Each member may have a different opinion to discuss with you. Regarding a mentally ill patient, each one may have a different story to relate to you while hiding from others. So take the opportunity to understand the patient by listening and interacting with the family members. Good healthcare professional- family relationship will not only support the patient and the family for early recovery, but also will it help to uplift the image of your professions and the professionals.

Activity 7



Observe the family of a patient admitted into your institute.

1. What type of message is given by their facial expressions?
2. What type of interaction has taken place after admission?
3. What are the questions they have asked you?
4. If not, did they interact with anybody else in the health care team?
5. Talk to the patient and family separately on two occasions. Note down the kind of information you collected about the patient?
6. How useful was the information to provide care for that patient?

Summary

Family members are important resources in health care. Except with paediatric patients, extremely limited contact exists in health care settings between healthcare professionals and family members of the patient. To be effective, there should be good communication between healthcare professionals and family members regarding the necessary care for patients.

When the stress is more the family members are not capable of supporting patients or the health care team members. By supporting the family members in this manner, the healthcare professionals can develop positive feelings among family members on their patient's recovery. If the patient is having only a physical illness at least, family members can talk with the patient. How helpless will the family members be?

When caring for the patient, healthcare professionals need to look for family concerns. In order to get the maximum support from family members in patient care, effective communication is very important. Exchange of ideas between the healthcare professionals and family members should have taken place adequately. Hospital environment is not a familiar one to both patient and family members. To make things comfortable for the family and the patient, as a healthcare professional, you need to develop a good

relationship with them based on trust. Limited contacts with family members lead to barriers of “limited access to information”

As patient is a member of the family unit, we cannot think of him/ her in isolation. Illness makes the disruption of the roles of the family and changes of the patterns of communication. When one becomes ill, the levels of bonds within the family and their behaviours lead to different types of family-patient relationships. Observing the behaviours of family members towards the patient and vice versa helps you to understand the existing differences among them. In order to support the patient and the family, healthcare professionals need to know about possible changes occurred within the family due to the illness. These may become barriers to maintain relationships and open communication. Knowing these is essential for speedy recovery and rehabilitation.

At times of stress, family supports the members with emotional warmth, love and care. In the presence of stress caused by illness, the patterns of communication within the family get changed. In a temporary illness condition, family members use open communication but with a serious illness there will be a selective communication. Fear of unknown leads to increase the distress. Therefore, it is the responsibility of healthcare professionals to encourage them to ventilate their feelings. Open communication is the key to overcome the barriers within the family members which supports family members to maintain the relationship between them. In this regard, understanding the bonds among the family members is very important. As healthcare professionals, you need to maintain good patient family relationship to provide better care, recovery and rehabilitation.

Objectives



After completing this session you should be able to,

- Define the term family
- Understand the bonds between the patient and his/ her family members;
- Identify the possible changes within the family relationship
- Differentiate the impact of open and closed communication patterns on the patient-family relationship.
- Examine the barriers to maintain the usual relationship between the patient and the family;
- Discuss the importance of having healthcare professional – family relationship
- Provide means and ways to develop and establish a healthcare professional- family relationship.
- Explain the barriers to develop a good healthcare professional- family relationship.

Self-Assessment Questions



Reflect on a situation that you or your family member has been admitted to the hospital due to an illness.

1. What type of role confusion occurred due to the admission?
2. What kind of communication barriers develop within the family?
3. In which way you all have maintained your relationship with healthcare team members?

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