

Keynote Speaker

Jonathan Silverman, University of Cambridge, England

Title: "Clinical communication teaching – why bother?"

Short abstract

This lecture will address whether expending the effort on communication skills learning will produce worthwhile rewards for both professionals and patients

Long abstract

Why bother with communication teaching?

- are there problems in communication between health professionals and patients?
- is there evidence that communication skills can overcome these problems and make a difference to patients, professionals and outcomes of care?

Can you learn communication?

- isn't it all a matter of learning by experience or osmosis?
- isn't it really a matter of personality, that some people can do it and others will never be able to?
- is there evidence that communication skills can be taught and learned?
- is there evidence that learning is retained?

Is the prize on offer to health professionals and patients worth the effort?

- will expending the effort on communication skills learning produce worthwhile rewards for both professionals and patients?

If the answer to any of these questions is "no", then we can all relax and get back to our busy worlds without worrying about yet another whole area to teach and the need to create a curriculum for all health professionals. But if the answer is "yes", then we ignore communication skills teaching at our peril. In this plenary, I will look at examples that demonstrate the central importance of communication to effective high-quality healthcare, explore the evidence that communication can be taught and learnt and look at the implications for us all.

Jonathan Silverman is Associate Clinical Dean at the School of Clinical Medicine, University of Cambridge and a retired general practitioner. He has been actively involved in teaching communication skills since 1988 and in 1993, undertook a sabbatical with Professor Suzanne Kurtz, teaching and researching communication skills at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Calgary. In 1999 he became Director of Communication Studies for the undergraduate curriculum in Cambridge, which now involves over 650 half day small group sessions per year. He is best known as one of the authors of the Calgary-Cambridge Guides to the Medical Interview, which provide a framework for describing the medical interview and incorporate a comprehensive set of skills referenced to the current evidence. The guides are used in 70% of UK schools. He has also co-authored two companion books with Suzanne Kurtz and Julie Draper, "Teaching and Learning Communication Skills in Medicine" (Radcliffe Publishing Second Edition 2005) and "Skills for Communicating with Patients" (Radcliffe Publishing Third Edition 2013). He has conducted communication skills teaching seminars throughout the UK, in Europe and N. America. In 2005, he founded the UK Council for Communication Skills Teaching in Undergraduate Medical Education for all 33 UK medical school, is immediate past chair of the teaching committee and now President-elect of the European Association of Communication in Healthcare.

