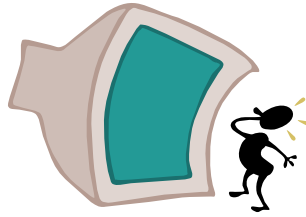


Physician Patient Relationship Tool
**When You Must Communicate with the Patient and
Use the Computer at the Same Time**



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The fact that so many practices have electronic medical records presents new challenges to physician patient communication and the physician patient relationship. When you have a patient in the room and also expect or need to enter information or access information via computer, the question is, "How can you tune in to the computer without giving patients the impression that you are tuning out on them?"

A study by Booth N, Robinson P, and Kohannejad J in **Inform Primary Care** (2004; 12-2: 75-83) demonstrated that computer use during consultation has an adverse effect on the quality of physician patient communication and a consequent negative impact on patient satisfaction.

Patients perceive the physician as inattentive and uninterested. Also, their anxiety increases as does the likelihood of becoming either resigned or demanding.








When you have a patient in the room and also expect or need to enter information or access information via computer, how can you tune *in* to the computer without giving patients the impression that you are tuning *out* on them?










It helps to become so familiar with typing and using the computer that it requires minimal attention. This makes it easier to keep the patient in the foreground while accessing on-screen information and taking notes in the background. Still, according to Booth et al. clinicians are rarely able to multi-task at this level and concentrate on the patient and computer at the same time.

The best practice regarding computer use is to alternate your attention to the patient and to the computer, making clear when you are switching from one to the other. For instance, listen intently with presence to the patient and then say, "Give me a moment. I want to make a note of that." Then, turn to the computer and enter the information. Don't try to do both at the same time.

See the chart below.

Physician Patient Communication While Using a Computer in Exam Room

<p>CONNECT PERSONALLY UPFRONT</p>	<p> Log onto the computer and look up patient's chart before they enter the room. Brief yourself on historical info and personal notes about the patient/family.</p> <p>As patient/family enter: Introduce yourself and greet people warmly.</p> <p> Introduce the computer and how your use of it will benefit you and them.</p> <p> Find out patient's concerns.</p> <p> Take a look at relevant intake and nursing notes. Review past results.</p> <p>Talk to patient and family about your approach to the visit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GREET patient/family warmly, • INTRODUCE yourself to everyone in the room. • Apologize for the wait if there was one. • CONNECT PERSONALLY. Mention something non-medical about person, their past history or reason for being here. • Attend to people's comfort. • Cater your language, posture and pace to the patient. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the computer and explain how it helps you care for them. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledge your intent to not let the computer interfere. ○ Reassure about confidentiality • Ask open-ended questions to learn about the patient and his/her needs and preferences. • Speak directly to the patient. • Check your understanding. • Explain what to expect. 	<p>"I'm so glad to see you, Mrs. Harris!" "Last time you were here, I think you were about to take a vacation to Disney World with your son? How was it?" "I hear you're having trouble with a cough! I'd like to help you get rid of it."</p> <p>"Before we go further, I want you to meet my friendly computer. I'll be taking some notes on it. That way, I'll remember what I'm learning and be able to refer to your information easily."</p> <p>"So tell me, what brings you here today?" "And what else?" Anything else?" "So, one reason you're here is that..." Tell me more about that." Anything else?"</p> <p>"So, here's what I'm thinking. I'd like to learn more from you each of your concerns and then I'd like to do an exam. Then we can talk about how best to proceed." "Sound okay?"</p>
<p>FIND OUT THE PATIENTS' PERSPECTIVES</p> 	<p>Ask patient for their thinking and ideas.</p> <p> Place screen so you can see patient AND screen.</p> <p> Enter subjective data.</p> <p>Invite specific requests and their importance.</p> <p>Invite patient/family reactions and thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify patient point of view. • Ask family member's ideas too. • Find out their goal today. • Learn about context. • Explain what you're doing as you enter info into the computer. • Welcome patient to view the screen. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage patient and significant other in decisions 	<p>"What do you think is causing the problem?"</p> <p>"What's bothering you most about this?"</p> <p>"How have your symptoms affected your activities, your family, school, work?"</p> <p>"How do you hope I'll help?"</p> <p>"Excuse me a moment while I enter a</p>

	 Ask patient/family to verify info.		<p>few notes in the computer. OK?"</p> <p>"Does that sound right? Is there anything I missed?"</p>
<p>SHOW EMPATHY</p> 	<p>Stay connected to the patient and. Be present.</p> <p>Tune in to their feelings.</p> <p><i>Express empathy in your words and nonverbal behavior.</i></p> <p>Be conscious of yourself and the focus of your attention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note body cues and tone of voice. • Reflect back the feeling you think you're hearing. Check out your understanding. • Compliment your patient on what he or she is already doing to deal with their need or concern. • Turn your whole self toward the patient and maintain eye contact. • Stay tuned in; show it (expression, touch.) 	<p>"What are you most worried about?"</p> <p>"That sounds painful/upsetting/disturbing!"</p> <p>"I can imagine you might feel worried!"</p>
<p>EDUCATE AND PARTNER IN THE CARE PLAN.</p> 	<p>Communicate diagnostic info.</p> <p> Enter diagnosis.</p> <p>Educate; explain what you are doing.</p> <p> Actions and instructions</p> <p>Share decision-making.</p> <p> Tell patient and family how you will log off. Assure confidentiality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and connect diagnosis to patient's upfront concerns. • Spell out possible side effects and the results the patient can expect • Check for understanding. • Explain action options and listen for patient preferences. • Assess their likelihood of doing what you're suggesting. Can/will they? Address this. • As needed, hold firm respectfully. • Invite more questions. • Clarify options for further contact and questions. 	<p>"I'm ordering the medicine we just talked about, so it will be ready for you."</p> <p>"I'm printing some helpful information for you. We can go over it together."</p> <p>"At this point, what questions do you have for me?"</p> <p>"So, how are you feeling about this visit? Did you get the result you wanted?"</p> <p>"If more questions come up after you leave, this is how you can reach me or one of my associates if I'm not available...."</p> <p>"In a few moments, I'll sign off my computer, so your information will be private."</p>
<p>COMPLETE THE VISIT</p>	<p>Say a gracious goodbye</p> <p> Document follow-up</p> <p> Enter after-visit summary</p> <p> Secure or log out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make closure statement. • Express appreciation and positive regard. • Wish them well. 	<p>"It's been good to see you, and I hope you'll get relief very quickly so you can go see those grandkids!"</p> <p>"I hope you feel better soon and get back</p>

Staying connected to patients when you are using a computer, PDA or chart strengthens the physician patient relationship and has a positive impact on four of the CAHPS survey questions about patient perceptions of their physicians.

CAHPS Question	Impact of Staying Connected
“Did the physician listen carefully to you?”	If you are focusing on the computer while the patient is talking, their perception is that you are not really listening. By clearly transitioning from the person to the computer and back and being very attentive when listening to the patient, even if you then shift to look at the computer, the patient is more satisfied.
“Did the physician explain things so you could understand?”	By explaining why you are using the computer and how it will help care for the patient, patients feel clearer and more tolerant of your use during office visits.
“Did the physician show respect for what you had to say?”	If you are not giving the patient your full attention when they are talking, this too is interpreted as a sign of lack of interest on your part.
“Did the physician spend enough time with you?”	When physicians remain tuned into the patient when communicating, the patient perceives the time the physician spent with them as longer than an objectively longer visit in which the physician’s attention appeared scattered.