

## Module 3: Lecture 2. How to communicate pain

### Introduction

All chronic pain conditions must be viewed within a more comprehensive biopsychosocial framework that takes into account biomedical issues but also includes how patients perceive their injuries, their disabilities, their pain, and how they make sense of what is happening to them. The words we use are crucial to this more comprehensive view since the words we use are at the same time our connection with, and expression of, the world around us. So the choice of the words we use is therefore critical in the delivery of healthcare, where a misunderstood word can undermine treatment and create unnecessary stress. Only by paying careful attention to the words we use, by choosing words that are clear and concise, and by understanding the principles of good communication, can we be assured that the message we intend is the message that is received.

Our culture reinforces the belief that people are not responsible for their own bodies' functioning, and patients often expect "quick fix" for their condition, including chronic pain. How to move a patient from that belief and expectation toward active collaborator in pain self-management strategies? It is unrealistic to expect a typical patient with pain to adopt behavioral self-management strategies, without first helping them to change their mindset, especially after their long and futile journey from one medical provider to another. To raise their motivation, the patient's trust has crucial importance. Research has shown that there is a strong association between a patient's trust in their health care practitioner and how well they follow treatment recommendations. For that purpose, there are lots of techniques and strategies that encourage the patient to express feelings and ideas and that convey acceptance and respect.

### Learning Outcomes Mapped to EFIC Pain Physiotherapy Curriculum

By the end of this session, the participants should be able to:

1. explain the importance of therapeutic communication
2. name and explain different strategies of therapeutic communication
3. understand and explain how words in speech and writing influence others' understanding of chronic pain and has significant impact on the clinical outcome
4. be aware that the wording used before and during painful medical procedures might significantly affect the painfulness and discomfort of the procedures
5. understand that the semantic and emotional impact of the words used by patients to describe their pain may improve its assessment.

### Preparation

There is no preparation needed.

## Reference material

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VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation: Communicating about Chronic pain: Instructions for clinicians. Available from: <https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTHLIBRARY/docs/Communicating-About-Chronic-Pain.pdf>