

Module 2 – Session 2

# Characteristics and principles of person-centred communication



# Overview of the session

## This session focuses on:

- Communication and the verbal and nonverbal skills needed to communicate effectively with women attending routine health check ups
- Person-centred communication (PCC):
  - Skills for discussing FGM, and for delivering FGM-prevention messages
  - Enabling and empowering women to change their beliefs and values about FGM



# Learning objectives

**By the end of this session, participants would have:**

- ✓ Discussed the importance of effective communication during a clinical consultation
- ✓ Become motivated to apply person-centred communication (PCC) in the context of a clinical consultation



# Effective communication

- Is a **two-way process** whereby people share information or discuss an issue together to try to reach mutual understanding
- It is two-way because when the sender transmits the message, the receiver generally provides feedback that the message has been understood:
  - Feedback can be **verbal** (e.g. “**Aha**”) or **non-verbal** (e.g. a **gentle head nod or eye contact**)
- It takes place when a message is delivered, received and understood in the way it was intended
- Both the health care provider (HCP) and the patient can be the sender and the receiver of information:

- These roles **alternate** throughout the consultation



# Person-centred vs. provider-centred communication

- **Provider-centred communication:**

- HCPs ask all the questions, guide the whole clinical consultation
- HCPs focus **only on the patient's medical complaint or disease**
- They can forget to ask about the **woman's perspective**
- All the decisions made during the consultation are **made by HCP, not the patient**
- HCP fails to consider the **woman's preferences, needs and values**

- **HCP is communicating in a person-centred way if s/he:**

- Allows the woman to tell **her concerns**
- **Listens to her attentively** and pays genuine attention to **her ideas/problems**
- Gives her the information she needs so she can make **informed decisions**
- Checks whether she has understood what s/he told her; encourages her to **ask questions**



# Why health-care providers should learn PCC? (1)

- **Communication** is very important in **everything we do in life**:
  - We communicate with – family members, friends/peers, colleagues, supervisors...
  - It is the process that influences the **quality of relationships**
  - Many of our problems in our personal/professional relationships result from **poor/inappropriate communication**
- **Learning PCC skills will help you to become**:
  - A more **effective communicator**,
  - A **better health-care professional** and  
A more **trusted colleague**



# Why health-care providers should learn PCC? (2)

- **PCC skills has several benefits, for the patient and for the provider**

Benefits for the patient:	Benefits for HCP:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Increased satisfaction with care</li><li>- Better relationships with HCPs</li><li>- Less anxiety and feeling more secure</li><li>- Greater comfort &amp; ability of patients to discuss their needs</li><li>- Trust that the HCP is competent</li><li>- Improved understanding of medical instructions, making it easier for patients to follow indications and continue the treatment</li><li>- Increased effectiveness of medical treatment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Improves the quality of care provided to patients</li><li>- Improves relationships with patients</li><li>- Allows providers to better understand the needs of their patients</li><li>- Providers who communicate effectively feel more self-confident</li><li>- Improves job satisfaction</li></ul>



# Person-centred communication (PCC) (1)

- Means communicating with patients in ways that allow the HCP to **understand the patient's perspective to motivate them for change:**
  - Who they are as a person;
  - What their personal beliefs and values are; and
  - What their expectations, needs and feelings are about their health and well-being
- The care and support to patients should be guided by **their needs & unique circumstances**





# Person-centred communication (PCC) (2)

- When we communicate in a person-centred way:
  - Patients feel that it was **planned with them**, rather than simply **for them**, and
  - The chance that the patient will follow a treatment plan or planned behaviour change is much greater

**IMPORTANT!** *The health-care provider should remember that, while respecting the patient's perspective is important, their role is always to work towards stopping FGM.*



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (1)

## 1) Creating a welcoming environment:

- By creating a welcoming environment, the woman will **feel safer and less anxious**:
  - This will allow her to **express her needs and concerns with less difficulty**
  - It will improve the **provider–patient relationship**
- If a woman does not feel welcomed or at ease, it will be almost **impossible to communicate effectively with her**



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (2)

## Tips for creating a welcoming environment:

- Always greet and welcome the patient in a **friendly yet professional manner**
- Positive remarks about **non-medical issues** such as the weather, generalities about the day. Ex. “Was your journey here OK?”
- Use the **patient’s name** (you can look it up in her medical record)
- **Introduce yourself**, giving your name and your role
- Ensure **patient privacy** (if possible, close the door or draw the curtain)



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (3)

## 2) Speaking clearly and simply:

- Means using terms and speaking in a way that the patient understands

## Tips for speaking clearly and simply:

- Avoid using **complex medical terms**
- **Speak slowly, giving time for the patient** to ask questions
- Regularly **check whether the patient has understood** the indications given
- Before bringing the consultation to an end, make sure you ask the woman **if she has understood and if she has any extra questions**



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (4)

## 3) Active listening: hearing what is being said:

- Means truly hearing what the patient is saying by **paying close attention to her words and body language**

## Tips for active listening:

- Listen and **pay close attention** to what is being said
- Listen **without being distracted** (not looking at the phone, computer, etc.)
- Pay attention to the **verbal and non-verbal messages**:
  - People often express their feelings through their actions/facial expressions/body language

- **Concentrating, listening, asking questions and taking time** to really hear and clarify what people are telling you are **core skills**



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (5)

## Tips for active listening (cont'd):

- **Do not rush the patient and do not be afraid of silences**
- **Do not interrupt, correct or speak over** the patient when she is speaking
- **Use non-verbal encouragement** such as:
  - Head nodding
  - Appropriate eye contact
  - Avoiding crossed arms or legs
- **Use continuers to encourage her to speak** – words and sounds such as:
  - “go on”; “hmmmm”; “aha”



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (6)

## 4) Using effective interviewing skills: Clarification, summarizing, and encouragement

### Tips: Use the following interviewing and counselling skills:

**a) Clarification:** Respectfully asking questions during the interview to clarify words/ ideas and emotions expressed by the patient:

- Clarifying words and ideas – for example:
  - “Could you please repeat what you just said?”

Clarifying emotions – for example:

- “How does this make you feel?”



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (7)

**Tips: Use the following interviewing and counselling skills (cont'd):**

**b) Summarizing:** this can be achieved in the following ways:

- **Restate the main points** (the content) of what the patient has said
- **Do not just repeat; put into your own words** how you have understood the person's situation
- **Do not state as fact;** use words that show you are checking whether you have understood correctly
- You can start summarizing by using the phrases:
  - “What I am understanding is...”; “In other words...”; “So, what you are saying is...”, “It sounds as if...”; “I am not sure that I am understanding you correctly, but I hear you say...”; “You sound...”





# Skills for effective person-centred communication (8)

**Tips: Use the following interviewing and counselling skills (cont'd):**

**c) Encouragement:** help to give recognition to a patient's feelings and actions, highlighting these in a positive way:

- “You’ve had a difficult time and handled it well.”
- “That’s great that you have decided to talk to your family about this issue.”



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (9)

## 5) Asking open questions:

- During a consultation, both the HCP and the patient ask questions.
- For the HCP, it is easier to communicate effectively with a patient when using open rather than closed questions:
  - **Closed questions shut down conversation** (answered with yes or no), but used when precise information is needed: For example:
    - Did you come here by bus? Have you been cut in the genital area?
  - **Open questions open up communication: For example:**
    - How are you feeling today? How did you travel here? Tell me about yourself?



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (10)

## 5) Asking open questions (cont'd):

- When asking open questions, the HCP can use words such as “**then?**” or “**and?**” to encourage patients to keep talking
- Open and closed questions can **work well together**.
- Open questions are very useful when:
  - Starting a consultation: Ex. “Hello, Ms. Okoye. How can I help you today?”
  - We want to gain a **broader perspective** on a patient’s situation and context: Ex.
    - “I would like to try and find out why you feel you should cut your daughter? Can you tell me some of the reasons?”
    - “How does this make you feel?”



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (11)

## 6) Expressing empathy:

- **Empathy** is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person
- Empathy is important because it:
  - Enables us to recognize the feelings of another person and communicate that we understand – building rapport;
  - Allows us to understand the individual's perspective, and so provide person-centred care, and
  - Shows respect and gives emotional support to the woman by letting her know that you really understand her feelings

## • Empathy vs. sympathy:

○ Sympathy: can be described as feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune

○ Empathy: involves trying to understand the other person's perspective



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (12)

## 7) Being non-judgmental and promoting dignity and respect:

- The HCP should try to remain non-judgmental at all times, even if the woman's views are different from their own:
  - Examples of **judgmental answers**:
    - “I cannot believe you did something like that. What were you possibly thinking?”
    - “That is definitely not OK. I am sure a lot of people would agree with me that that is not something that you can say”
- Always treat patients with **dignity and respect**:
  - It is the health-care provider's ethical duty to do so



# Skills for effective person-centred communication (13)

## Tips for being non-judgmental and promoting dignity and respect:

- **Do not pass judgment.** If you find yourself being judgmental, stop yourself:
  - Instead of judging, try to understand
- When asking **sensitive questions**, always ask for the patient's permission and make sure she is comfortable discussing the topic. For example, you can say:
  - “I would like to ask you a question about FGM. Would that be OK with you?”
  - “I wonder if we could spend a few minutes talking about FGM?”
- Note that each of the above questions is formulated in a **polite manner** and gives the woman the chance to say if she is not willing to talk or is uncomfortable



# Take Away Summary

- ❖ Effective communication happens when people discuss an issue together to try to reach mutual understanding
- ❖ The skills needed for effective communication can be learnt
- ❖ Effective communication has several benefits, for the patient and for the provider
- ❖ Learning effective communication skills helps HCPs to become more successful communicators, better health-care professionals and more trusted colleagues
- ❖ Person-centred communication (PCC) means communicating with patients in ways that allows the HCP to understand the patient's perspective
- ❖ PCC helps patients to feel safer and less anxious, which allows them to better understand medical instructions



# Take Away Summary (2)

❖ Key skills for effective PCC during a clinical consultation include:

- ▶ Creating a welcoming and safe environment
- ▶ Speaking clearly and simply
- ▶ Active listening (truly hearing what the patient is saying by paying close attention to her words and body language, and making sure she feels that you are registering what she is saying)
- ▶ Using effective interviewing skills: clarifying, summarizing and giving encouragement
- ▶ Asking open-ended questions
- ▶ Expressing empathy and
- ▶ Being non-judgmental, and promoting dignity and respect





# References

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