

## REVIEW ARTICLE

# HOLISTIC APPROACH IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS TEACHING OF MEDICAL STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

**The aim:** To analyze the relevance of communicative competence in medical practice and to choose the best pedagogical methods by improve communication skills in future doctors through the use of a holistic approach in teaching.

**Materials and methods:** Sociological, informational and analytical research methods were used in the research.

**Conclusions:** The holistic direction in education promotes partnership between a student and a teacher, the achievement of mutual understanding and trust, better commitment and motivation to learn. The use of feedback forms helps to recognize and understand the needs and feelings of each student, work effectively with diversity, motivates the teacher to continuous self-development and self-improvement. Modern teaching methods such as working in small groups, Storytelling and role-play according to students are more valid in mastering the communicative competence of the future doctor.

**KEY WORDS:** holistic learning, communication skills, doctor's communicative competence

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational processes in the era of globalization require the use of such learning technologies that would be aimed at forming a holistic picture of the world, preparing students for life in a dynamically changing environment [1,2]. The issue of a holistic approach in education in modern conditions has become very relevant. A student in holistic education is perceived as a holistic person in need of harmonious learning and development. The teacher does not focus only on the content of the subject, but pays attention to the relationship with students, preferring a partnership model of relations, recognizes and understands the needs and feelings of students, open to the views of each person with constructive resolution of conflicts arising from diversity, shows flexibility, ready for constant self-development and self-improvement [3,4]. The basic principles of holistic learning are: connectedness – the transition from a fragmentary approach in learning to an approach that creates connections at each level of learning; inclusion – application of a wide range of educational approaches for people with different needs; balance – recognition and support of complementary aspects of personality (for example, analytical and intuitive thinking) [3].

Acquisition by students of basic competencies that form a highly qualified specialist occupies a special place in the training of medical workers [5]. Communicative competence is one of the basic competencies of a doctor [6]. Competences are best learned using modern methods of education, taking into account holistic approaches that will include in the active learning process all participants,

considering the individual needs of each student [7]. Therefore, we can confidently state the fact of the need to identify the most effective and efficient techniques for mastering communicative competence as a component of quality professional training of physicians.

## THE AIM

The aim of this study was to analyze the relevance of communicative competence in medical practice and to choose the best pedagogical methods by improve communication skills in future doctors through the use of a holistic approach in teaching.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sociological, informational and analytical research methods were used in the research.

## REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Employees of the Department of Primary Health Care and General Practice-Family Medicine have developed and implemented in the educational process for fourth-year students of the Medical Faculty a selective subject of Communicative Skills in Medical Practice.” According to the work program, the subject consists of 3 credits, the total number of hours – 90, of which – 30 hours of practical classes and 60 hours of individual work. Fourth-year students attended ten two-hour practical classes over two

semesters. The first five lessons learn the basics of communication in medical practice: the definition of communication, the basic models of communication between doctor and patient, technology and basic counseling skills, communication barriers. The next five classes are devoted to studying the structure of counseling, working with different types of patients, informing bad news, motivational counseling and prevention of emotional burnout. Students were recommended to practice the acquired skills while performing practical work at clinical departments.

Because the study of selective subject was based on a holistic approach to learning, students were asked to complete an anonymous feedback form upon completion of the course. The questionnaire was compiled and agreed by the teachers of the department and included 10 items. The form contained questions related to students' impressions of studying the subject, preferences, needs for future learning and professional activities and wishes to optimize the study of the subject. The analysis of the survey revealed that 33 students (97.0 %) out of 34 respondents noted the importance of studying communication skills for the future doctor. To the question "Do you think that a doctor's communication skills are no less important than his professional qualifications?" 26 respondents answered yes, 8 – partially yes. According to students' thought, the most important parts of the subject are mastering the basic techniques of effective counseling – 30 (88.2 %), knowledge and adherence to the structure of counseling – 26 (76.5 %), the ability to have difficult conversations and inform bad news – 22 (64.7%), knowledge of the peculiarities of counseling "special" patients – 17 (50 %).

To the question "What format of studying the subject do you consider the most optimal?" only 5 students (14.7 %) indicated distance learning, 17 respondents (50 %) prefer traditional, live study of the subject and 12 respondents (35.3%) – for a mixed format of study.

Several questions of the questionnaire concerned the choice of acceptable methods of educational process. The majority, 29 students (85.3 %) noted the high efficiency of work in small groups in mastering the subject, 26 students (76.5 %) were impressed by the use in practical classes of storytelling, stories of clinical cases from real practice with emotional impact, motivational, cognitive sphere of the listener, 25 students (73.5 %) – for group work with a presentation on Google disk with the joint creation of a syllabus, 20 students (58.8 %) noted the role play as the best technique in mastering the subject. At the same time, only 8 respondents (23.5 %) showed commitment to solving situational problems and watching educational videos in practical classes.

Several items of the questionnaire contained questions related to the continuation of study and improvement of students' communicative competence. In the answers to the questionnaire, all respondents indicated the need to improve their communication skills in the future, and 32 students out of 34 (94.1 %) will recommend the study of selective subjects to their colleagues. The majority of students, 22 persons, consider it necessary to continue studying the prevention

of emotional burnout of health professionals in the future. 18 students plan to improve their leadership skills. For 19 respondents it is important to continue studying the topics of empathy and humanity in the work of a physician. 19 respondents plan to study the peculiarities of communication in the work process with colleagues, nursing staff, as well as with representatives of the health care facility administration. For 15 respondents, the study of the peculiarities of communication with critically ill patients in the provision of palliative care is considered promising.

To improve communicative competence, almost all respondents plan to study individually, using special literature, watching available videos on the Internet, passing free distance webinars and trainings. At the same time, 10 respondents (30.3 %) are going to attend thematic improvement courses in the future and only 4 (12.1 %) are ready to attend paid courses and trainings.

Thus, the successful acquisition of communication skills by students requires holistic approaches to learning, which involves the search and selection of new pedagogical methods and technologies [7,8]. Only in this case, mastering the communicative competence important for a medical worker will be effective and motivate the student to improve the acquired skills.

## CONCLUSIONS

The holistic direction in education promotes partnership between a student and a teacher, the achievement of mutual understanding and trust, better commitment and maintaining motivation to learn. The use of feedback forms helps to recognize and understand the needs and feelings of each student, work effectively with diversity, motivates the teacher to continuous self-development and self-improvement. Modern teaching methods such as working in small groups, storytelling and role-playing according to students' thought are more valid in mastering the communicative competence of the future doctor.

In the future, we plan to develop objective tools and methods for assessing the acquired communication skills of the student.

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**Conflict of interest:**

*The Authors declare no conflict of interest.*

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