

EDUCATIONAL MOMENTS[®]

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Introducing conversations in practice by Andy Cole and Clair Bulpin

WHY INITIATE A CONTACT LENS CONVERSATION?



What do your practice staff and practice environment communicate?

Communication is so much more than words

Effective patient communication can:

- Improve clinical outcomes
- Make more efficient use of our time
- Increase patient value and build loyalty

To communicate well use every patient interaction as an opportunity to really build rapport with your patients.

Remember the old cliché that any conversation is a two-way process; being understood is a combination of what you say and do, and how others respond.

It's more than the 30 minute consultation!

Patients see their eye care experience starting from the moment they book their appointment and only ending when they collect their purchase (see below).

Recognise the key points of contact

Skilled communicators understand the importance of key points of contact within the customer journey and how the handover between each member of the team is crucial.



Why take a patient-centred approach?

Dr Fiona Fylan (health psychologist) explains the importance of a partnership between the patient and eye care practitioner to agree the best outcome and how to achieve it.

- The **practitioner** contributes their clinical knowledge
- The **patient** is the expert on what their requirements are

In reality a more traditional, paternalistic approach is adopted whereby the practitioner identifies the 'best' outcome from their own perspective and gives the patient instructions about what needs to be done to achieve that outcome.

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WHAT TO LOOK AND LISTEN FOR

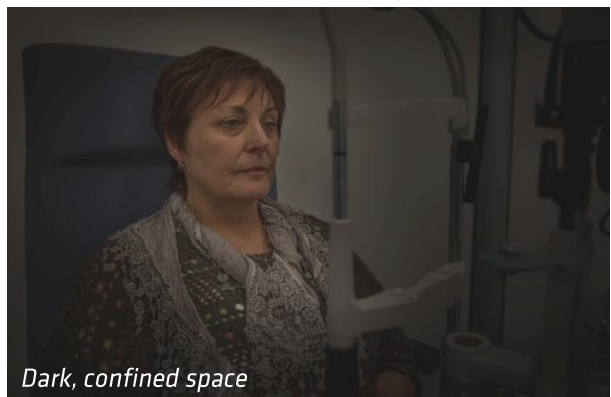
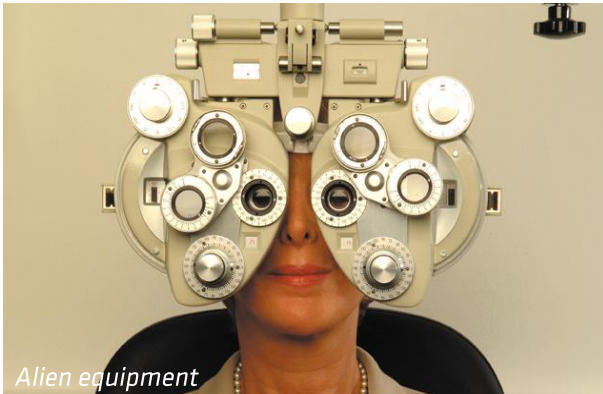
While we may all like to consider ourselves as proficient communicators, our patients may well disagree.

Look out for barriers

With new contact lens wearers, lack of information about what's involved and apprehension about touching or putting something 'in' the eye means that there are greater barriers to overcome.

Listen

By active listening you demonstrate empathy and full consideration of others which will help you achieve rapport.



There can be emotional, social or psychological reasons for trying contact lenses. You may discuss personal issues, such as how they feel about their appearance or how they're viewed by others. Their interest in contact lenses may be sparked by defining moments in their lives, such as changing schools or getting married, that they might not otherwise discuss during the course of an eye examination.

When your patient tells you what they think and why and how they feel, you know you have achieved rapport with your patient.

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WHAT TO SAY AND DO

Treat your patients how they want to be treated instead of how you want to be treated

Build rapport with your patients

Rapport is the process by which two people become mutually responsive to each other and is the key to every successful interaction.

- Psychologist Will Schutz describes how the need to feel **significant**, **competent** and **likeable** are the three factors that underline rapport.
- Instead of fitting the patient in to your 'routine', think about establishing a relationship with each individual in a similar way that you would in social situations.
- Building rapport with your patients will give you better information which, in turn, helps you make better decisions and higher quality recommendations.
- By considering how you can establish and maintain rapport with your patient you will make much more efficient use of your consultation time.

Try to lose your comfort blanket

Most practitioners begin appointments with the same well-oiled phrase. Using stock words and phrases, while often well meaning, lacks the sincerity of a genuine conversation.

Treat them as an individual

An appointment for us is 'routine' yet anything but for our patients – ensure they know they have your full attention and that their own specific needs and concerns are addressed.

Identify your strengths and weaknesses

By understanding your personality, interaction style and reputation you can improve your communication skills.

Gain 'concordance' rather than compliance

This requires you to ask more questions, use more collaborative language and create a partnership with your patients that will lead to greater success.

Make patients feel important

By being genuinely interested in your patients and their interests and by inviting their feedback on a new lens or solution you enhance interaction with your lens wearers and make them more receptive to advice.



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Acknowledgement



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Both are Faculty members at the Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Institute of Johnson & Johnson Medical Limited.