

How to improve doctor-patient communication

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A recent article in *The New York Times* discusses doctor-patient communication and how one hospital designed a strategy to improve it. To understand how bad the situation was at one hospital, doctors in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, completed a simple baseline assessment of how they communicate with their patients. The assessment found that most interactions lacked a formal introduction and empathy on the part of the doctor.

The hospital in Harrisburg set out to improve their practice by developing a training program consisting of mock patient interviews and assessments between doctors and actors playing patient roles. A physician coach also sat in on the interviews to observe and provide feedback. More than 250 physicians were trained using this technique. In just two years, patient satisfaction scores for doctors at the hospital increased 40 percentile points.