

Preface

Taking care of patients is both a tremendous responsibility and an incredible privilege. Health care professionals have unique opportunities to work with, support, and help individuals at some of the most important times of their lives. The experience of being trusted, relied upon, and having others invest their confidence in your knowledge, skills, and expertise makes health care work meaningful and rewarding.

We owe it to those for whom we care to ensure we are practicing our professions to the best of our abilities. Not only do we need to fully engage and remain focused, we also need to find innovative ways of working better together. Interprofessional person-centered care has emerged as a central organizing paradigm for enhancing the quality of care and the impact of what we do. Central to interprofessional practice is the need to communicate effectively.

Communication is the common clinical skill shared by all health care professionals. We communicate through observation, listening, responding, speaking, hearing, gesturing, and simply being present. While each profession has its own unique and important technical and scientific knowledge base, this information is trapped without an effective vehicle for sharing it with patients and colleagues.

Communication in Interprofessional Care: Theory and Applications was written to provide health care professionals at all stages of their career with opportunities to enhance the quality and impact of their patient-focused practice and in the process amplify their own professional satisfaction. As the title suggests, the book is divided into two sections. The theory section is designed to help readers understand the science and art of communication. Learning and understanding theory provides a lifelong foundation for personal and professional development, as circumstances and requirements evolve with time. Rather than simply tell you how to communicate in specific situations, an understanding of communication theory can help you to better develop natural, authentic responses that are suited to your personality, temperament, and specific situation. Communication theory also provides you with a vocabulary to think about, analyze, and discuss complex interpersonal situations in a more systematic way. Theory for this section draws upon diverse literature in the social sciences, including personality psychology, social psychology, sociology, cognitive science, and anthropology.

The applications section is based around a series of real-world situations that I or my colleagues in practice have experienced. These situations range from touching to tragic to terrifying, and they are all in a day's work for any health care professional. It is tempting to hope that the case studies in the applications section can provide easy

answers and perfect outcomes to complex human interactions; of course, this is not the case. Instead, this section provides you with opportunities to reflect on the Theory section, think about your own strengths and challenges as a communicator, then imagine “what-if” scenarios of alternative approaches to dealing with difficult situations.

I have been a researcher for 20 years, an educator for 25 years, a pharmacist for 30 years, and a human being for several more years than that. Regardless of the role we play or the job we hold, interacting with other human beings is one of the most difficult, important, rewarding, frustrating, and essential things we do in our day-to-day lives. Although communication is the focus of much of my teaching, research, and practice, I have learned so much writing this book and am so appreciative of the opportunity to share this with you. Interpersonal communication is a lifelong journey. I hope this book will be one small but helpful step on your pathway.