

# Teaching Tips For Better Patient Outcomes

A recent study conducted by Dr. Roy Kessels shows patients forget 80% of what a doctor tells them after they leave the clinic. Even more discouraging is half of the information they think they remember – they remember incorrectly!<sup>1</sup>

There are a myriad of reasons why poor communication happens and patients walk away not understanding their treatment plan. What can a healthcare professional do – right now - to combat these gaps in communication? Part of the solution is to continuously improve one's teaching skills – this can happen inexpensively & right now. Doctors and nurses can achieve better patient outcomes if they practice **five quick tips for teaching & communicating** a drug treatment plan to patients. These tips are supported by Dr. Kessels' research and the ancient Medical Model for teaching called: "Tell, Show & Do".

After the patient's condition has been diagnosed consider the following steps to make instructions & treatment plans easier for patients to understand and learn:

- 1.) **Structure** the explanation of the treatment plan in manageable chunks. (Recall is good for up to 4-5 tasks, **HOWEVER**, under stress it is much less! Tell things in 2 to 3 manageable sections.)
- 2.) **Start with** the most **important information first** – using simple and specific language.
- 3.) **Show** a visual aid to back up spoken word to help patients learn about their condition & treatment plan.
- 4.) **Patient Paraphrases** - check for understanding - have them say what they heard about their treatment plan.
- 5.) **Summarize** the visit by sending them away with a written treatment plan, visual aids & a list of resources to learn about their disease. (Since the Internet is full of questionable info – direct them to resources you trust!)

Involving patients through multiple modalities (hearing, seeing, saying, touching & writing) increases the chances that they understand & will follow the treatment plan because it is **THEIR** part to play in the healing process.

Once patients are more involved they are invested in the treatment plan. Today is a good day to implement Structure, Start, Show, Patient Paraphrase & Summarize.

Happy Teaching!

Mary Schutten, MA – Has 20 years in Total Quality Management Training & Design, Certified Educator and a Trainer for the National Family Caregiver Association. Currently, the principal of IdentiMed, L.L.C. – a med management tool for patients and caregivers. It is teaching guide and a health literacy tool. It allows patients/family caregivers to learn to manage multiple meds and communicate more effectively/efficiently with professional healthcare providers. [www.identimed.com](http://www.identimed.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Kessels, Dr. Roy, "Patient's Memory for Medical Information", Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, April 2003