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NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN DOCTOR-PATIENT INTERACTION: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THREE MAJOR CITIES OF KERALA (INDIA)

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INTRODUCTION

Hybels and Weaver\(^1\) rightly said, “To live is to communicate. To communicate is to enjoy life more fully.” Health communication can be defined in a formal way as “any type of human communication whose content is concerned with health,”\(^2\) where the health-related transactions and the factors that influence these are the focus point. Health communication is a combination of both verbal and nonverbal factors. Northouse and Northouse\(^3\) proposed that non-verbal communication has special relevance in healthcare, primarily because patients pay close attention to the non-verbal signals of health professionals, and may rely on these to give a rapid means of gaining information before any verbal interaction takes place.

This study addresses relevant issues related to the nonverbal communication in doctor-patient interaction. It is based on the premise that verbal communication alone is not sufficient to effectuate productive interaction between a doctor and a patient. It is the ideal combination of verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication that can make or mar the doctor-patient interaction. Using the survey method to probe into the minds of the doctors, the study tries to establish a relationship between the doctors’ perception about nonverbal communication and their suggestions based on their perception and past experiences. The study specifically points out that training in nonverbal communication has become imperative in the present times owing to the fact that the patient compliance with the treatment depends largely upon their considering the doctor as empathetic, along with being an expert in his/her field.

ALLOPATHY, HOMEOPATHY AND AYURVEDA DEFINED

Allopathic medicine is an expression commonly used by homeopaths and proponents of other forms of alternative medicine, to refer to mainstream medical use of pharmacologically active agents or physical interventions to treat or suppress symptoms or pathophysiologic processes of diseases or conditions. The expression was coined in 1810 by the creator of homeopathy, Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843). Never accepted as a mainstream scientific