

Chat task 1: Non-verbal communication

This first session in the chat strand starts off by looking at non-verbal communication, one aspect of communication that is affected by cultural differences. Non-verbal communication is a major factor in the development of rapport between you and the patient and comes into play as soon as the patient enters the room.

Aim

To raise awareness of how cultural factors can affect communication during a doctor-patient interview.

Preparation

Read the following extract:

“Communication between physician and patient involves the exchange of both verbal and non-verbal information. It is estimated that 80% of information exchanged in the physician-patient relationship is made up of non-verbal cues and these cues serve to enhance, reiterate, substitute or contradict the verbally imparted information. Non-verbal cues include universal cues (e.g. facial expressions) and culturally specific components (e.g. gestures; touching; degree of eye-contact; posture and body position; clothing; voice quality and tone; boundaries between personal space and space for interaction with others; and extroversion or introversion.”¹

Considering each of the culturally specific components of non-verbal communication mentioned in the extract (i.e. gestures, etc), how do you think British norms may differ from the norms in your own country? Decide which components may differ the most.

Chat session task

Through discussion decide how norms of non-verbal communication differ between cultures, and between your culture and the UK.

¹ Majumdar, B., Keystone, J.S. and Cuttress, L.A. (1999) Cultural sensitivity training among foreign medical graduates, *Medical Education*. 33:177-184.