Title: D-CAST: Dental Communication Assessment Skill Tool

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What problem was addressed: In dentistry, knowledge and technical skills are not the only prerequisites for good practice. Hence training of communication skills are highly relevant and important components of dental curriculum. Currently there is no structured program to sensitise Dental Undergraduates regarding communication skills in India. Keeping this in mind the present study was initiated to develop and assess the effectiveness of a novel communication tool; D-CAST: Dental Communication Assessment Skill Tool in a closed setting.

What was done: The study is as a Prospective Cohort, Questionnaire-based study assessing Communication skills amongst third and final year Dental undergraduate's students in a Dental Institution in Delhi, India. Prior to developing the program curriculum a baseline study was conducted wherein information from Dental students regarding their understanding and need for communication skills in curriculum was assessed. We also evaluated the patient's expectations during the doctor patient communication through a closed ended questionnaire. Following this, curriculum for communication was developed using Delphi technique. The curriculum developed was implemented among subjects over a period of two weeks, who are randomly allocated into two groups experimental (n=20) and control (n=20). Respondents were asked to rate statements on a five-point Likert scale. Information on relevant demographic variables including age, gender and the student's academic year was also collected.

What was learned: There was a significant difference among the test and control groups with regarding the effectiveness of the communication skill tool assessed by patient exit interviews. While for gender both male and female third (p=0.056) and final year (p=0.042) dental students showed a significant difference.

The outcome of this study demonstrated that the course was effective in improving the interviewing skills of dental students and thus enabling the patients to put forth their anxiety, expectations and inquiries regarding treatment in a more precise manner.

D-CAST as a tool should be implemented early in the Dental students training program. The strengths of the module being:

- It improves the doctor patient communication skills.

- It is feasible for routine use as an assessment tool for undergraduate dental students

- Easy to use and Reliable (repeatable and valid).