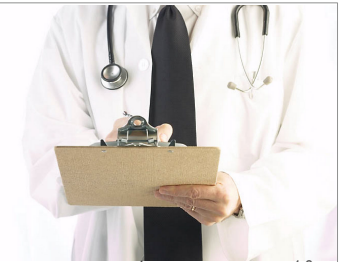


Empathy in Health Technologies

Rethinking the Ways Clinicians and Patients Share Concerning News



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Overview

A consequence of the movement from paper-based medical record-keeping to digital and online formats is the potential loss of the human element that occurs during face-to-face doctor-patient dialogue. To help reduce the potential for this loss, we have studied how empathy may be included in the design of health technologies through interviews with clinicians and patients, followed by ideation for design implications.

Empathy

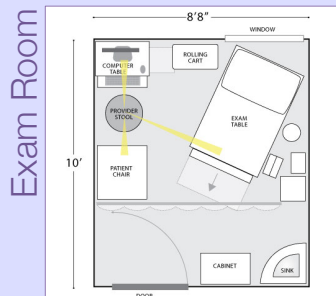
- The most important human element in all forms of helping relationships
- Empathy is described as "more like an art than a science"
- In the doctor-patient relationship, empathy is viewed as a prerequisite for successful therapeutic outcome

“Understanding how you would feel if you were in the same situation as somebody that is going through an illness (Male clinician, age 32)”

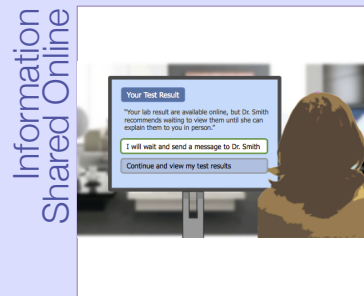
“Treating people like human beings rather than treating people like an illness (Male clinician, age 59)”

Strategies clinicians use when giving a diagnosis include building a partnership of trust with patients, being honest and giving hope, presenting information simply, acknowledging physical and emotional discomfort, and communicating through non-verbal means.

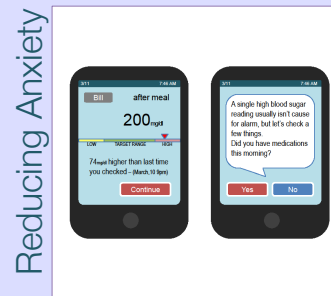
Design Ideas



The facilities and technologies in a consultation room or an exam room should be carefully arranged in a way to encourage the clinician and patient to sit side-by-side when they need to share data and look at charts together.



For people viewing their health information online, interfaces may be designed to prevent the revealing of bad news inadvertently. People are given an option to wait until medical professionals can help them accurately interpret the results.

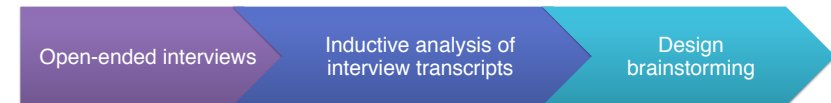


The interface that conveys concerning health news may be designed to reduce a patient's anxiety by guiding the patient through possible reasons while using language that reinforces an 'us' relationship.



The interface that records health information may be designed to contain personal characteristics and narratives that help clinicians to better remember each patient.

Methods



- Interviewed six clinicians, six patients, and two patient's family members
- Visited consultation rooms and sketched the layout of artifacts and technologies

Empathic Communication Strategies

Recursive process of understanding patients and communicating with patients

