

**Dealing With 'Difficult' Patients  
in Community Pharmacy Practice:  
Reducing Pharmacist Stress  
and Improving Patient Care**

**Bruce L. Lambert, Ph.D.  
Department of Pharmacy Administration  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
lambertb@uic.edu  
(312) 996-2411**

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# Overview

- Stress and the workplace
- Communicating with 'difficult' or 'challenging' patients
- Implementing new communication techniques

# Stress and the Workplace

- Defining stress
- Stress as stimulus
- Stress as response
- Stress as relationship between person and environment

# Cognitive Theory of Stress

- Primary appraisal
- Secondary appraisal
- Stress begins with one's perceptions and interpretations of events
- Managing stress begins by managing perceptions and interpretations

# Dealing with Stress: Reacting or Responding

- Fight or flight response
- Reacting to stress
- Responding to stress
- Better to respond thoughtfully than to react mindlessly

# Consequences of Stress

- Physical
- Psychological
- Professional

# What Job Characteristics Make Work Less Stressful?

- Freedom to learn and use new skills
- Authority to make decisions
- Social support
- Patient counseling is potentially far less stressful than dispensing-related work

# Stress Reduction Techniques

- Stretching
- Progressive Relaxation
- Deep breathing
- Meditation
- Visualization
- Exercise



# Dealing with 'Difficult' Patients: The PAR Technique

- Methods adapted from Indian Health Service Model
- Prepare
- Assess
- Respond

# Prepare

- Use the prescription
- Use the patient profile
- Use personal knowledge of the patient
- Prepare mentally

# Assess

- Think in terms of barriers to overcome
- Emotional Barriers
- Functional/Practical barriers
- Pharmacist Barriers
- Pharmacy environment barriers
- Look and Listen!
- Concentrate 100% on patient

Respond

Use

Reflecting

Responses

# What are reflecting Responses?

- “Sounds like you’re...”
- “What I hear you saying is...”
- “So you believe...”
- “In other words...”
- “It seems like you...”
- “Could this be what’s going on?”
- “You appear to be feeling...”
- “Let me see if I understand. You...”

# What Do Reflecting Responses Achieve?

- Acknowledging
- Clarifying
- Focusing

# How Do I Use Reflecting Responses?

- Acknowledge Patient's feelings before moving on
- Limit your responses to what you really understand
- Don't expect to get it 100% right the first time

# What Nonverbal Behaviors Are Best?

- Eye contact
- Forward lean
- Match verbal and nonverbal messages



# Additional Issues

- Probing
- Pausing
- Open-ended questions
- Setting Limits
- Being specific
- Starting over

# Always Remember the Goal

- The goal of counseling is to verify patient understanding
- The goal is not to make patients like you
- The goal is not for you to like your patients

# Implementing the PAR Techniques

- Start Slowly
- Progress Gradually
- Have Realistic Expectations of Yourself and of Patients
- Ask Colleagues for Support and Feedback

# Summary

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- Communicating with 'difficult' or 'challenging' patients: The PAR Technique
- Implementing new communication techniques

Thank You