

Counseling in Eye Care

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Received: 02 January 2015| Revised: 07 February 2015| Accepted: 15 March 2015

Published online: April 06, 2015

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Abstract: Health is a basic need. When patients come to the hospital they are very anxious about their condition, cause and the nature of their disease. Many questions play on their mind. Is it curable or not? How much time and money is required for cure? They are also anxious to know each and every information related to their disease. Counselling is a very powerful process to allay their fears. It plays a vital role in all segments of health care. Nowadays counseling is no more restricted to treat mentally deranged or drug addicted people. In eye care, counselling is very useful to increase compliance and allay fears.

Keywords: Counselling, EyeCare, Patient Care, Role of counsellor and objective of counselling

INTRODUCTION

Patient counseling is an important part of health care management. Due to lack of proper and adequate knowledge or information, patients are unable to take proper decision. Every patient should know about the nature of the disease and the benefits of the treatment suggested by the doctor. Counseling is a process of passing these information to the patient. One aspect of patient counselling is also to help patients who have apprehensions on aspects of treatment, surgery, adapting to hospitalization, resource mobilization. Patient Counselling helps such people in understanding about the treatment, length of stay, cost, prognosis, and plan for their rehabilitation. [1]

In developed countries counselors have a very important role in treatment process but in developing countries it is neglected. The reason may be the larger volume of patients which leads to scarcity of time required to explain everything to the patient to take away anxieties and apprehensions and lack of awareness.

Benefit of counseling

The objective of counseling department is to guide, help and provide alternatives to a patient according to their need by considering their constraint. They should not be forced to do anything beyond their limit. Patient counseling is a simple process of educating beneficiaries about the need and importance of eye care. It builds confidence among potential patients. Counselors assist patients in decision-making by giving detailed information about the operation, pre-operative care, post-operative

Journal of
Multidisciplinary
Research in Healthcare
Vol. 1, No. 2
April 2015
pp. 133–136

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care, discharge, and follow-up. Counseling enhances patient satisfaction, and those satisfied patients act as catalysts to bring more patients. Counselors should educate the patients on safe medication and personal hygiene. The outcome is better when the relatives of the patients participate. In many organizations, counseling has been one of the key contributors to dramatic growth of the hospital. [2] Not only the patients are made to feel comfortable to share their problems, and counselors also help the doctor and the management to understand the patients' views, and other information about circumstances, which are vital for services planning.

So counseling in health care is not to give advice but to help and improve health care by understanding the patients needs.

Who can be a counselor?

A person who has completed his schooling, and has good communication skills and sympathetic could be identified as a trainee. In-house training should cover both theory and practical. In the theoretical part trainees are taught the basic anatomy and physiology of the eye using models and charts, common eye diseases, general surgical procedures. Special care should be taken to give clear information about the advantages of intraocular lens implants (IOLs) over conventional aphakic corrections and communication skills. In the practical part, trainees are shown cataract extraction with IOL implantation and other common surgeries. Training to improve interpersonal skills and knowledge to answers to hypothetical questions commonly raised by the patients are a must. Counseling needs to be supplemented by a model of an eye, IOL, and information materials printed in the local language to be given to patients. Attending outreach camps is also included to give trainees exposure to work in the community [3].

Hence a counselor must be well versed about the hospital and the related diseases and must have enough patience, patient friendly attitude and appear confident.

Role of a Counselor

A counselor can convert a non motivated patient to a motivated one by creating a good image of hospital in the patients mind. Counselor allows sufficient time to discuss about the problem and its solution with the patient and listens to different issues raised by the patient, including personal problems as the doctors who are busy do not have much time to explain to a patient . The counselor must examine the case record properly to know in depth about the disease and plan of treatment and answer queries accordingly [3]. It is always advisable to discuss problems with the ophthalmologist whenever the counselor feels it is necessary.

Counselors visit every patient hospitalized to ask them about their problems so that they can feel more at ease and relax since a satisfied patient who undergoes surgery can motivate others to come for treatment

In the outreach screening camps counselor get their first opportunity to motivate patients for surgery. When the benefits of surgery are well explained most patients agree to undergo surgery. Counseling becomes more effective when patients' relatives, who may be paying for the surgery, also take part in the discussion. Counseling becomes easier if somebody who has already undergone surgery is present in that particular camp. [4]

Counselors can give very good feedback to the hospital management regarding patients' opinion about the different facilities and the scope of improvement.

Usually the eye care services remain under-utilised in summer and get over-crowded in winter. It has been seen that effective counseling of patients can change this seasonal preference, and the hospital can perform uniformly throughout the year

Types of Counseling:

Different types and methods are used in counseling process. But in eye care counseling can be either individual counseling or group counseling. Group counseling can be either client centered counseling or Community/ Disease centred counseling.

1. Individual counseling is to talk one is to one with the patient to explain about the disease and treatment plan.
2. In group counseling either a patient with his family are explained in a group or if a group has a common ailment then they can be addressed together as done in case of eye camps . Though counseling is usually client or patient centered some times in community based programmes or epidemics the mass is educated in a group about a common disease.

A counselor to be successful:

A counselor must have the detail information about the organization, the services rendered in the hospital and availability of consultants.

They should also be aware about the charges or packages with reference to different type of services.

Find out whether the patient needs cashless facility or not in case of hospitalization.

Fix the packages according to the patients need and affordability and plan for surgeries.

Explain do's and don'ts before and after surgery. Apart from surgical aspects, counselors tell patients about the importance of regular medication and follow-up in glaucoma and maintenance of personal hygiene.

Apart from above general information some points that are to be taken care of exclusively in eye care by a counselor:

- In case of cataract surgery illustrate about the different type of lenses and their features like their material (hydrophilic, hydrophobic,) their design(Aspheric, unifocal, multifocal, toric, single piece, multipiece) etc.
- Vision prognosis should be explained mildly but clearly in cases where the prognosis is guarded like in trauma, retinal surgery and advance glaucoma stage.
- Special counseling is required for the patients with low vision or diseases which cause gradual loss of vision.
- When the patient comes to know about the condition which can lead to permanent blindness patient feel nervous and very helpless. So they must be handled carefully and these counseling can take more time to console the patient and help them to get rid of that trauma .[5]
- Proper counseling is very essential in eye camps as the patients return to their own place after surgery and most of them are illiterate. So every information should be carefully explained in their language like how to maintain hygiene, how to use medicines and what to do and not to do?

CONCLUSION

Counselling improves the quality of service and builds the confidence of patients, which in turn increases motivation in the community to receive proper eye care services rather than going to quacks. Eye is a very vital part of the human body. Everybody needs proper guidance and service to save it. Good counseling can, not only benefit the patient but can also improve the reputation and recognition of the hospital which will have a good social impact and in the ultimate growth of hospital.

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