# Promoting patient participation in healthcare interactions through communication skills training: A systematic Review

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## Background

- **Training patients to be good communicators** remains an essential, yet understudied area (Bylund et al., 2010)

- **Provider-patient visits are interactive and reciprocal**, requiring engaged and competent communicators on both sides (Parker et al., 2005)

- **Communication training can empower patients** to overcome a variety of challenges:
  - omissed empathic opportunities (Pollak et al., 2007)
  - oracial/ethnic communication disparities (Ashton et al., 2003)
  - oEMR competing for attention (Asan, Smith & Montague, 2014)

- **Benefits of active patient participation:**
  - oSatisfaction and psychological wellbeing (Robinson et al., 2013; Venetis, Robinson & Kearney, 2015)
  - oTreatment adherence (Cegala, Marinelli & Post, 2000)
  - oProviders' accurate knowledge of patient (Street & Haidet, 2011)

- **Previous reviews are either outdated** (Harrington, Noble & Newman, 2004) **or topical** (Bylund et al., 2010)

## Objectives

- To conduct a systematic review of patient communication training research

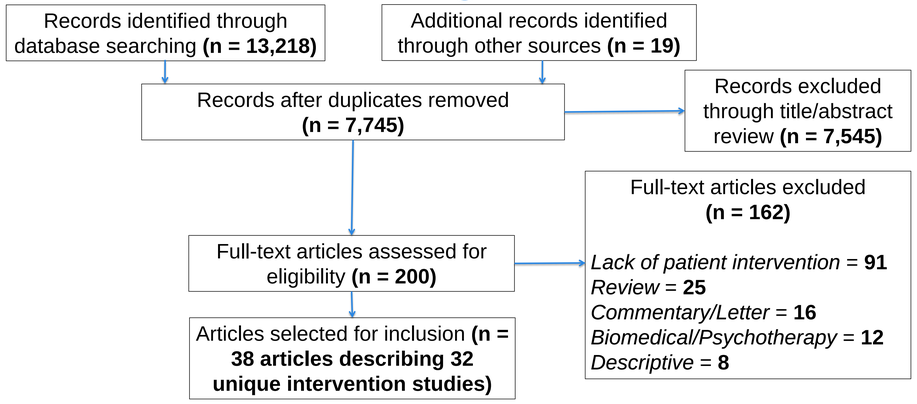
## Methods

- Systematic literature searches (Sep 28, 2015 and Sep 16, 2016 (update)) were conducted in six databases: MEDLINE (via PubMed); Embase; The Cochrane Library; Web of Science; PsycInfo (via OVID); and ERIC

- Publications were selected for review by consensus among two authors (3rd author arbitrating as needed)

- Extracted data included intervention study design, sample characteristics, content and structure of training, outcomes assessed and findings reported

## PRISMA Flow Diagram




## Summary of Included Studies

| | Population | N | Mean age | % Female | Mode of presentation | Behaviors encouraged |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Epstein et al., 2016** | Cancer | 265 | 64.4 | 55 | Mixed | Ask questions; check understanding; express concerns; state preferences |
| Van Bruinessen et al., 2016 | Cancer | 97 | 55 | 60 | Multimedia | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns; state preferences |
| Beach et al., 2015** | HIV | 160 | 45.1 | 33 | Face-to-face | Ask questions; express concerns |
| Bartels et al., 2013** | Primary care | 17 | 58.5 | 53 | Mixed | Present info; ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Cegala et al., 2013 | Peds surgery (parents) | 65 | 33.1 | 72.5 | Written | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Meropol et al., 2013 | Cancer | 629 | 59.5 | 48.5 | Multimedia | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Post et al., 2013 | Cancer | 50 | 50.7 | 100 | Multimedia | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Ho et al., 2012 | Community | 38 | 42.7 | 84.2 | Mixed | Present info; ask questions; express concerns |
| Katz et al., 2012 | Primary care | 270 | 56 | 63.7 | Multimedia | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Peek et al., 2012 | Primary care | 21 | 66 | 88 | Mixed | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; state preferences |
| Roter et al., 2012** | Primary care | 194 | 50.1 | 38.5 | Multimedia | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns; state preferences |
| Aboumatar et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2011** | Primary care | 270 | 61.3 | 65.9 | Face-to-face | Ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Bylund et al., 2011 | Cancer | 32 | 53.8 | 87.5 | Mixed | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns; state preferences |
| Street et al., 2010 | Cancer | 148 | 58.2 | 80.9 | Face-to-face | Ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Wilkie et al., 2010 | Cancer | 151 | 62 | 26 | Mixed | Present info |
| Dwamena et al., 2009 | Community | 40 | 53.7 | 77.5 | Mixed | Present info; ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Haskard et al., 2008** | Primary care | 2,196 | NR | 42.1 | Multimedia | Ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Harrington et al., 2007** | Primary care | 81 | NR | 85 | Face-to-face | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Tran et al., 2004 | Community | 110 | 53 | 73 | Mixed | Ask questions; express concerns |
| Fisch et al., 2003 | Community | 70 | NR | NR | Mixed | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns; state preferences |
| Kim et al., 2003 | Primary care | 768 | NR | 100 | Mixed | Ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Sepucha et al., 2002 | Cancer | 132 | 52.5 | 100 | Mixed | Ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Cegala et al., 2001 | Primary care | 33 | 71.9 | 57.6 | Face-to-face | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Cegala et al., 2000a; Cegala et al., 2000b; Post et al., 2001 | Primary care | 150 | 45 | 71.3 | Written | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| McGee & Cegala, 1998 | Primary care | 20 | 37 | 70 | Face-to-face | Present info; ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| McCann & Weinman, 1996 | Primary care | 120 | 42.8 | 73 | Written | Ask questions; express concerns |
| Street et al., 1995 | Cancer | 60 | 59.1 | 100 | Multimedia | Ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Lewis et al., 1991** | Peds primary care | 141 | 8.6 | 43 | Multimedia | Ask questions; express concerns; state preferences |
| Greenfield et al., 1988 | Primary care | 59 | 49.7 | 50 | Mixed | Ask questions; state preferences |
| Anderson et al., 1987 | Primary care | 150 | 58 | 0 | Multimedia | Ask questions; check understanding; express concerns |
| Greenfield et al., 1985 | Gastro | 45 | 55 | 9 | Mixed | Ask questions; state preferences |
| Robinson & Whitfield, 1985 | Primary care | 192 | NR | NR | Written | Ask questions; check understanding |

*Notes:* ** = included communication training for healthcare provider

## Results

- Most frequently targeted **primary care** (n = 16) or **cancer patients** (n = 9) and used a **randomized controlled design** (n = 19)

- Training formats: **materials only** (n = 13); **materials plus individual coaching** (n = 13); and **group-based** (n = 6)

- **Delivered immediately pre-visit** (n = 17), targeted **multiple skill categories** (n = 31) and **lasted ≤ 1 hr** (n = 16)

- Eight of ten studies that assessed **total level of active participation** found a significant effect; Findings were **mixed for individual behavior categories**

- Six of seven studies that evaluated **visit duration** found no training effect

- Seven of ten studies found that **trained patients exchanged significantly more information** with their providers

- Little evidence of link between communication training and improved health, psychosocial wellbeing, or treatment-related outcomes

## Conclusions & Future Directions

- **Communication training is a useful approach to increase patients' total level of active participation in healthcare interactions**

- Some communication behaviors may be more amenable to training (e.g., expressing concerns)

- Additional research is needed to determine the most efficacious training programs with the strongest potential for dissemination

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