

Dr. Google vs. the Pharmacist: Practical Strategies for Misinformation and Trust in Community Pharmacy



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Disclosures and Conflict of Interest

Catherine Gilmore declares no conflicts of interest, real or apparent, and no financial interests in any company, product, or service mentioned in this program, including grants, employment, gifts, stock holdings and honoraria.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) was utilized in the development of this educational content. ChatGPT-5.5 Plus was utilized for the *generation of works cited/references* and *language editing*.



Pharmacist Objectives

At the conclusion of this program, the pharmacist will be able to:

- Identify common communication barriers in community pharmacy practice, including patient hesitancy, misinformation, and limited health literacy.
- Recall the components of a structured communication framework that can be used to address misinformation and navigate challenging patient interactions.
- Recognize practical approaches to tailor patient counseling based on individual patient needs, beliefs, and levels of health literacy.



Technician Objectives

At the conclusion of this program, the technician will be able to:

- Identify common communication barriers in community pharmacy practice, including patient hesitancy, misinformation, and limited health literacy.
- Recall the components of a structured communication framework that can be used to address misinformation and navigate challenging patient interactions.



1. Which of the following is an example of misinformation?
 - A patient asks how to take a new medication
 - A patient says they saw online that blood pressure medications cause dementia
 - A patient requests a refill too early
 - A patient asks if their medication is covered by insurance

Pre-Test Question



2. Which counseling approach is most appropriate for a patient with limited health literacy?

- Use medical terminology to be more precise
- Ask "do you understand?" at the end of counseling
- Provide all possible side effects to the patient for accuracy
- Use plain language and confirm understanding with teach-back

Pre-Test Question

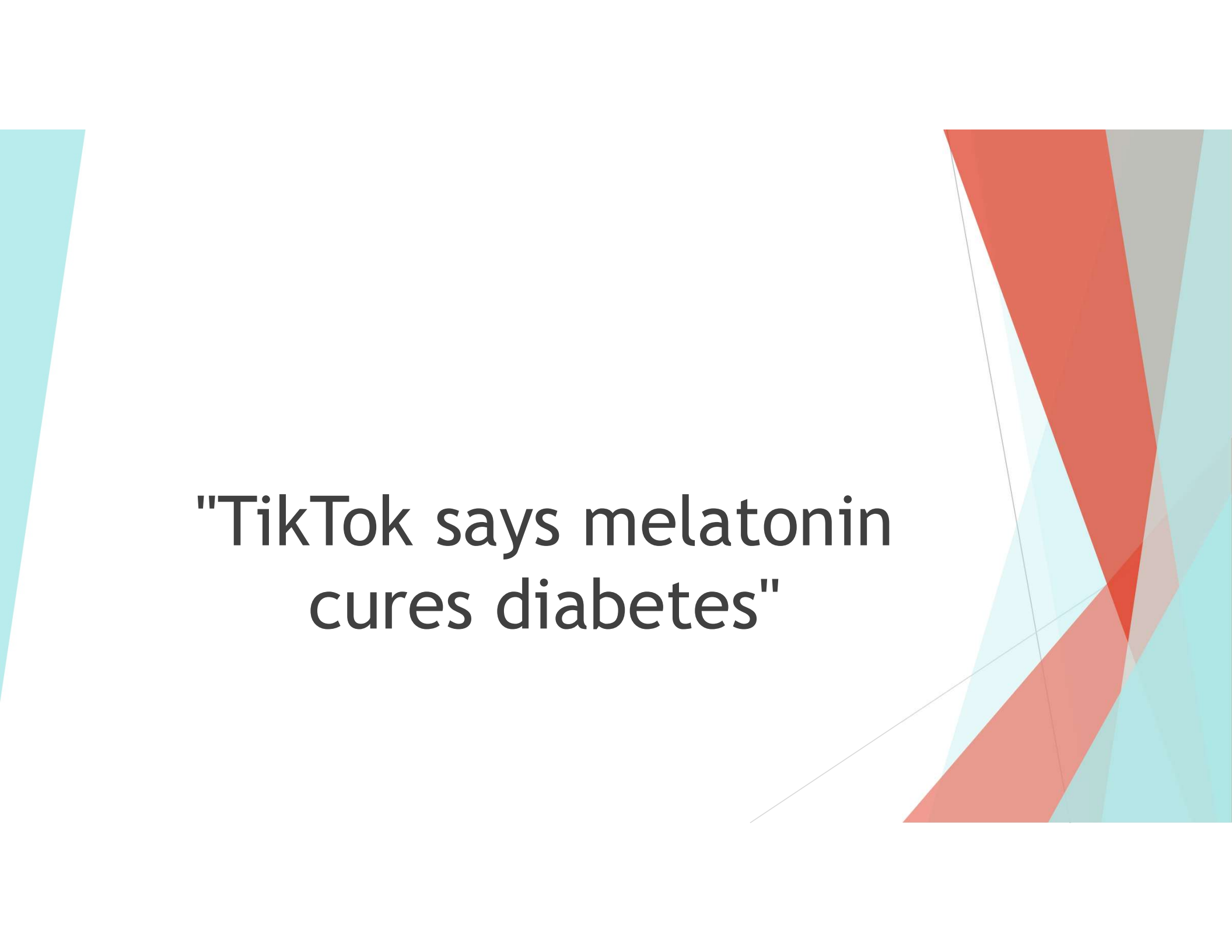


3. Which response best demonstrates the "connect" step of the CARE framework?

- "That is completely wrong"
- "You should not trust Facebook"
- "I appreciate you bringing that up. There is a lot of confusing information out there"
- "You need to take this medication because your doctor knows best and has prescribed it to you"

Pre-Test Question



The background features abstract geometric shapes. On the left, a teal triangle points towards the center. On the right, a large red shape, resembling a stylized 'X' or a series of overlapping triangles, dominates the space. A thin grey line extends from the bottom left towards the red shape. The text is centered in the white space between these elements.

"TikTok says melatonin
cures diabetes"

Communication Landscape



1955



Now



Changes in the Patient Counseling Landscape



Why counseling has changed:

Social media (TikTok, Facebook groups, Reddit)

Podcasts, influencers

AI-generated misinformation



Patients often have:

More information

Worse information

Stronger opinions



World Health Organization. *Managing the COVID-19 infodemic: Promoting healthy behaviours and mitigating the harm from misinformation and disinformation*. Published September 23, 2020.

Camejo M. *Science, access, and accountability in a changing health landscape*. Pharmacy Times. Published June 2025.

Common Communication Barriers

Misinformation

- Inadvertent spread of false information
- Accidental; not intended to harm

Misinformation

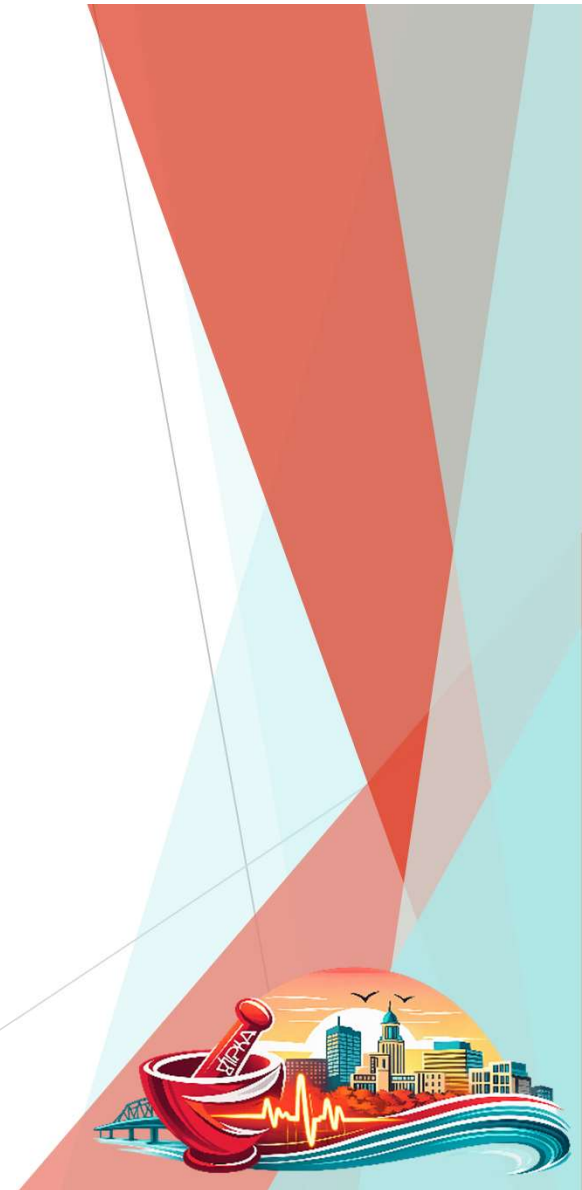
unintentionally
distributing
incorrect information

Disinformation

knowingly developing
and disseminating
incorrect information
intended to deceive

Mal-information

disturbing information
such as personal information
or "shock-value" information
intended to harm



Common Communication Barriers

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unintentionally
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Disinformation

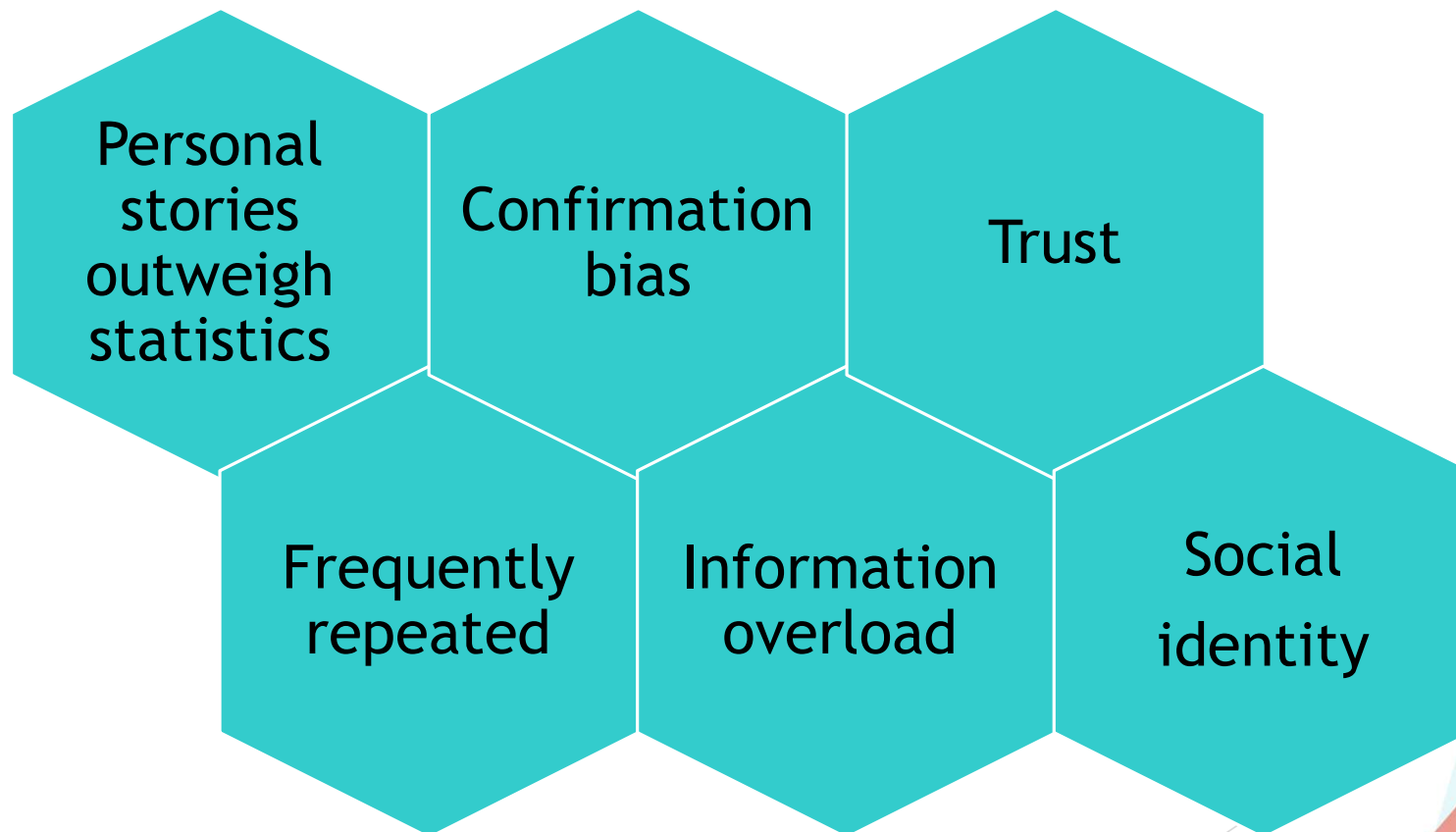
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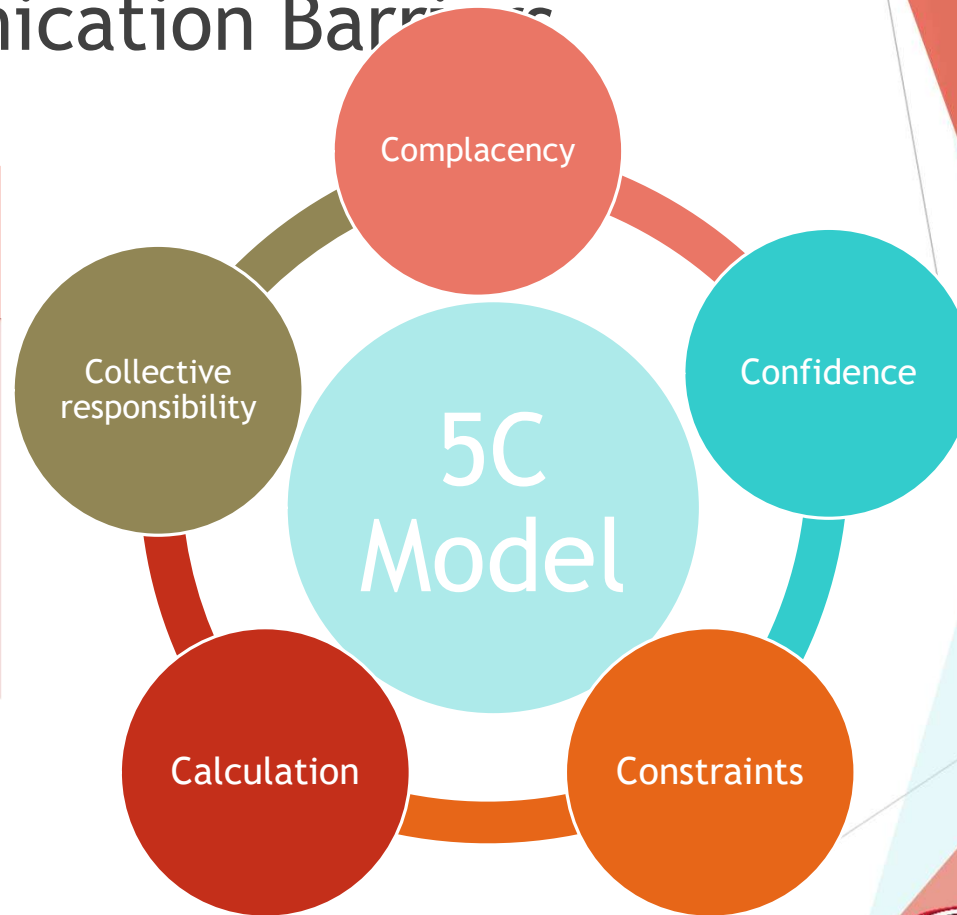
Why People Believe Misinformation?



Common Communication Barriers

Hesitancy

- Not just vaccines
- Fear vs misinformation



Common Communication Barriers

Health Literacy

- Ability to find, understand and use information to inform health-related decisions
- 1 in 10 English-speaking adults in the US has “proficient” health literacy

Pharmacy Environment

- Busy pharmacy
- Interrupted workflow
- Limited privacy
- Staffing constraints

9 in 10 adults struggle with health literacy



Common Communication Barriers

Emotions

- Fear
- Embarrassment
- Anger
- Previous negative experience

Language and Cultural

- Varied beliefs and values
- 25.7 million people in America with limited English proficiency



Why Traditional Counseling Fails

Information
dumping

Correcting
too quickly

Medical
jargon

Interrupting

Trying to
"win"

Assuming
the concern



Community Pharmacist Advantages

Most accessible healthcare professional

No appointment needed

Multiple touchpoints

Longitudinal relationships

Opportunity to reinforce provider recommendations



Communication Frameworks



Motivational Interviewing

Best for: vaccine hesitancy, medication hesitancy, lifestyle changes

Core principle: RULE

Technique: OARS



CASE Approach

Best for: misinformation

Corroborate

Find
common
ground

About Me

Establish
credibility

Science

Provide
evidence
that is
brief and
focused

Explain/
Advise

Personalize
recommend-
ations



Communication Frameworks

Ask-Tell-Ask

- Ask
 - "what have you heard?"
- Tell:
 - provide concise information
- Ask:
 - "what are your thoughts?"

Shared Decision-Making

- Good when there is genuine patient choice
- Three-talk model:
 - Team talk
 - Option talk
 - Decision talk



Communication Strategies



Approaches to Communication Barriers

Low Health Literacy

- Plain language
- Teach-back
- Pictures
- Chunk and check

Misinformation

- Don't debate
- Clear communication
- Explore
- Understand
- Redirect



Approaches to Communication Barriers

Emotional patient

- Validate first, educate second

Busy patient

- 30-second counseling
- Prioritize
- Use follow-up opportunities

Distrustful patient

- Build trust
- Don't overwhelm
- Focus on shared goals



Approaches to Communication Barriers - Special Populations

Older adults & caregivers

- Slow your pace
- Speak clearly
- Larger print
- Visual cues

Language barrier

- Use translated materials
- Use medical interpreters, if possible



Communication Strategies



Ask open-ended question ("what questions do you have")



Confirm understanding using teach-back



Patient-friendly language



"I don't want that
vaccine"

Final Tips & Take Home Points



Facts alone rarely change minds



Patients remember how you made them feel



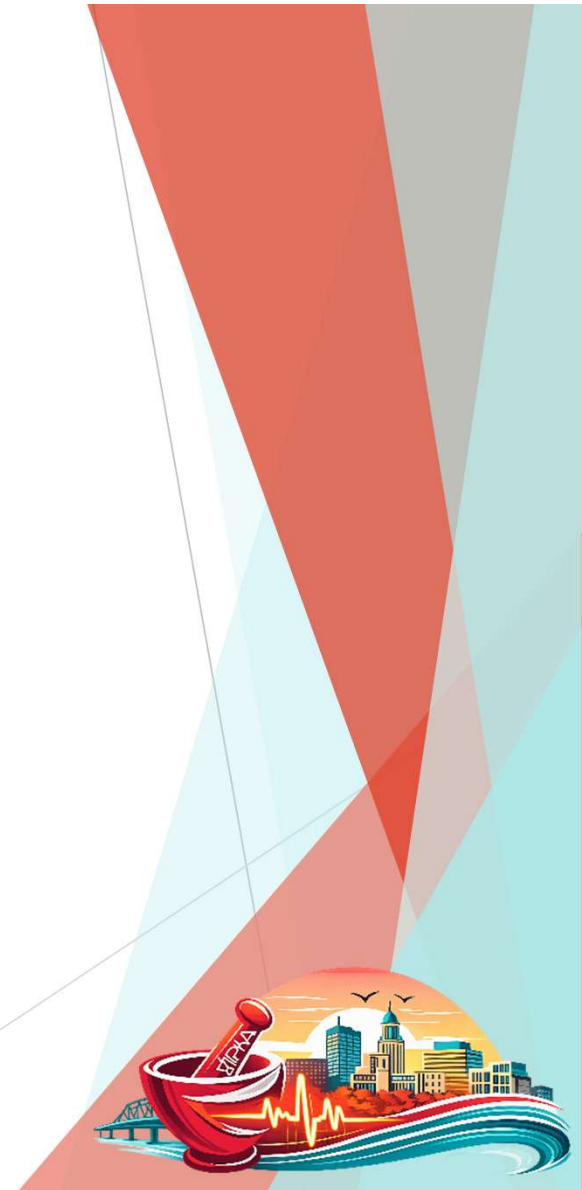
Curiosity is more powerful than correction



Every interaction is an opportunity to build trust



Communication is a clinical skill, not just a soft skill



Questions???



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Post-Test Question



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Thank you

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