

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*.



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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.



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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.



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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**



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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**



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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**



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"TikTok says melatonin
cures diabetes"

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Communication Landscape



1955



Now

Image citation: https://www.diseasereport.org/article/pubid/JCOM_2501_2026_CO2/

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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.

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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

Association of Immunization Managers. Incorrect vaccine information. Published October 25, 2021.

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Common Communication Barriers

Misinformation
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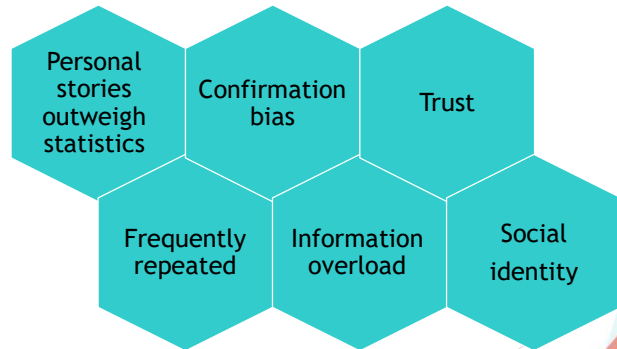
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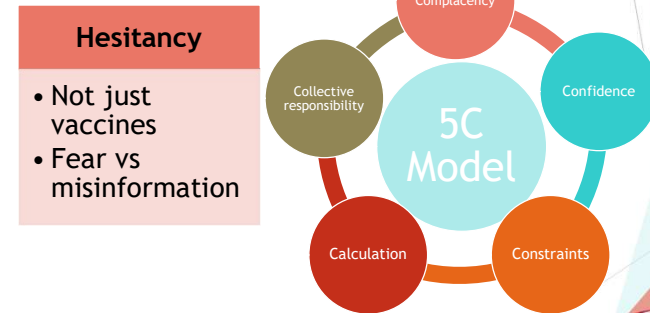
Why People Believe Misinformation?



Hongermeier T, Dobes A, Cope E, et al.; CDISC Trust and Patient-Centeredness Workgroup. Background. In: Trust & Patient-Centeredness Workgroup: Improving the Source Credibility of Patient-Centered Clinical Decision Support Tools. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; July 2023. Chapter 2.

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Common Communication Barriers



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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

9 in 10 adults struggle with health literacy

Pharmacy Environment

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

Center for Health Care Strategies. What is health literacy? Published March 2024. <https://www.chcs.org/resource/what-is-health-literacy/>
Ambas EM. Optimizing patient counseling in pharmacy practice. US Pharm. 2026;51(6):13-17. Published June 12, 2026.

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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

Network of the National Library of Medicine. An introduction to health literacy. Updated June 15, 2026. Accessed July 9, 2026.
Ambas EM. Optimizing patient counseling in pharmacy practice. US Pharm. 2026;51(6):13-17. Published June 12, 2026.

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Why Traditional Counseling Fails

Information
dumping

Correcting
too quickly

Medical
jargon

Interrupting

Trying to
"win"

Assuming
the concern



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Community Pharmacist Advantages

Most accessible healthcare professional

No appointment needed

Multiple touchpoints

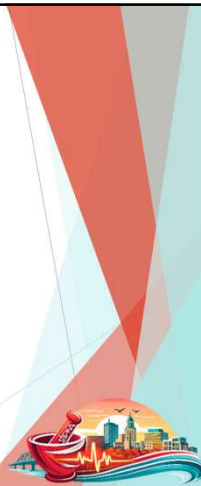
Longitudinal relationships

Opportunity to reinforce provider recommendations



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Communication Frameworks



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Motivational Interviewing

Best for: vaccine hesitancy, medication
hesitancy, lifestyle changes

Core principle: RULE

Technique: OARS

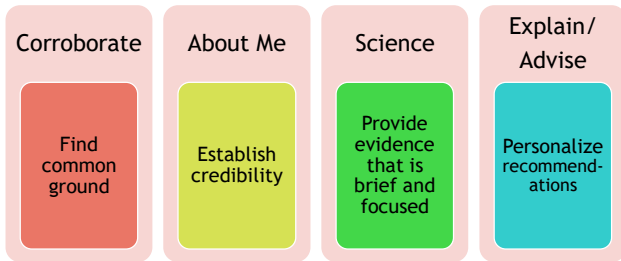


Rollnick S, Miller WR, Butler CC. Motivational Interviewing in Health Care: Helping Patients Change Behavior. 2nd ed. Guilford Press; 2022.

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CASE Approach

Best for: misinformation



Jacobson RM, Van Etta L, Bahta L. The C.A.S.E. approach: guidance for talking to vaccine-hesitant parents. *Min Med.* 2013;96(4):49-50.

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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

Silverman J, Kurtz S, Draper J. *Skills for Communicating With Patients*. 4th ed. CRC Press; 2024.
Elwyn G, et al. Shared decision making: a model for clinical practice. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2012;27:1361-1367.

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Communication Strategies



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Approaches to Communication Barriers

Low Health Literacy

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

Misinformation

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

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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

Patel R, Patel S, Patel J. Making medication counseling count: practical tips for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. *Pharmaceutical Journal*. Published December 19, 2025.

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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

Arbitas EM. Optimizing patient counseling in pharmacy practice. *US Pharm*. 2026;51(6):13-17. Published June 12, 2026.

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Communication Strategies



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



Confirm understanding using teach-back



Patient-friendly language

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"I don't want that vaccine"

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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

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Questions???

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Post-Test Question

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



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Thank you

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