

## Perfect Phrases for Healthcare Professionals

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0196-0644/\$-see front matter

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## Perfect Phrases for Healthcare Professionals

*Rotte M, Lopez B*

*McGraw Hill, 2012*

*132 pages, \$12.00*

*ISBN-13: 978-0-07-176833-7*

During each clinical encounter, excellent communication skills and strong rapport with one's patients are just as vital for the emergency physician as the medical knowledge needed to treat the individual. Unlike the family practitioner, who can develop this relationship over a lifetime, emergency physicians rely on the former to build rapport in mere minutes. The foundation for these skills is currently developed during medical school and ultimately honed through the experience of clinical encounters as a resident and attending physician.

*Perfect Phrases for Healthcare Professionals* attempts to develop a series of strategies and discourse one can call on when faced with challenging clinical situations requiring effective communication. The authors state from the preface that this book is not meant to replace the unique interactions between patients and providers. Instead, it serves as a framework for establishing better communication and improving patient care.

This first edition, which is the size of a large pocketbook and could easily fit in one's white coat, encompasses 132 pages broken down into 7 chapters. Each chapter focuses on perfect phrases for such challenging dialogues as patients upset about their care to breaking bad news to patients and their families. Within each chapter, the overarching theme is broken down into further areas of focus. For instance, the chapter on breaking bad news has subcategories, including breaking news of an unfavorable diagnosis, breaking news of death, and breaking bad news about pediatric patients; an aspect that makes it easy to quickly find the topic one desires.

*Perfect Phrases for Healthcare Professionals* is well written and easy to read. Each chapter or subsection begins with a brief description highlighting the communication conflict the physician might face and reasons for such issues. The authors then provide real clinical scenarios to help illustrate cases in which effective communication is vital to conflict resolution and more satisfied patient outcomes. The scenarios occur in various settings ranging from ambulatory areas such as the emergency department to the inpatient wards, thus making this book applicable to care providers across all specialties. After this, the reader is offered a number of ready-to-use phrases to address the

specific issue and navigate the provider to the desired endpoint. Additionally, the authors have even included a section on how to deal with difficult colleagues in a professional and efficient manner; a challenge for health care workers at all levels of training.

The strengths of this book lie in its structured way to address challenging communication issues faced daily by physicians. This is the ideal book for the medical student or resident in training because it can help develop a logical, professional, and caring style for communicating in the discourse minefield that one finds in the health care setting. In retrospect, having such a reference during my own training might have saved me from stumbling through these uncomfortable and anxiety-raising interactions only to arrive at the same phrases after years of clinical experience.

As we move toward using simulation in other aspects of medical education, it would make sense to incorporate this book, its simulated scenarios, and its communication strategies into the training process to address this important but often less-emphasized aspect of one's health care professional development.

One potential weakness of this book was that its entire content is based on the recommendations and thoughts of 2 authors and lacks referenced evidence for the reader to support their statements. Despite this, I found the phrases and strategies they used to be consistent with those used by many of my mentors and colleagues, thus supporting their assertions.

In all, *Perfect Phrases for Healthcare Professionals* is a valuable addition to the medical education literature. The book fills an obvious void by providing well-devised phrases and communication approaches for the challenging conflicts and patient encounters we face daily. I would recommend this book to health care professionals from all backgrounds and experience levels. Communication will forever be one of the cornerstones of medicine, and having a book like this will allow providers, from the trainee to the experienced attending physician, to excel in this aspect of patient care.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annemergmed.2012.08.003>