

20 Tips to Improve Your “Webside Manner”

With the increasing use of telehealth, Doctors need to develop a new skill – good “webside manner.” Webside manner is the video equivalent of bedside manner. It includes developing rapport with patients and effectively communicating with them during video visits. Following are 20 tips for good webside manner.

1. Try to review the patient’s chart ahead of time. This will reduce the necessity to look at the chart while you are speaking with the patient.
2. Create a system for letting patients know if you are running more than 15 minutes late for a video visit.
3. Be sure you have a strong WiFi connection. Closing extra browser tabs may improve video quality. Jot down the patient’s phone number prior to the video visit so that if there is a connection problem, you can easily convert the visit to a phone call.
4. Conduct the visit in a quiet, private place that is free of noise from children, pets and outdoor activities. If possible, set up your workstation so that there are no distracting items behind you. Solid neutral tones such as gray or tan are the best backgrounds for video. If the computer or device you are using is situated so the patient is looking at a window, close the blinds to reduce glare.
5. Keep your appearance professional. Do not conduct a video visit in pajamas.
6. When the video starts, you can put the patient at ease with a wave of your hand and a question such as, “How is your day so far?” If you’ve never met or haven’t seen a patient in awhile, introduce yourself. Ask the patient if they can see and hear you.
7. Ask the patient what they would like to accomplish during the visit. Make a note of their key concerns.
8. Look into the webcam, not at the patient’s image on the screen. This may feel counter-intuitive; however, if you look at the patient’s image, it will appear to the patient that you are not looking directly at them. You may need to raise your chair or lower your monitor to make it easier to look into your webcam. Situate your chair so you are directly in front of the webcam rather than off to the side. Ask the patient to do the same.
9. Pause for two seconds after the patient stops speaking before you respond. Connection issues may create a delay, and if you respond quickly, you may interrupt the patient.

10. Tell the patient if you need them to close window blinds or reposition their device so that you can see them better. If a patient is attempting to show you something on their body, provide clear instructions about how they can adjust the camera to give you a better view. For example, “Move it to your right.” or “Move it away from your body.”
11. Do not check your phone or other devices while speaking with a patient. If you need to look at something in the patient’s chart, let the patient know that you are about to do so.
12. Throughout the visit, use body language such as nodding to let the patient know you’re listening.
13. Practice active listening by repeating back the patient’s concerns and symptoms.
14. Watch for signs that may indicate that a patient is in an environment where they do not feel comfortable sharing personal information. This may include whispering or brief, non-descriptive responses.
15. Do not eat during a video visit. Let the patient know that they have your full attention.
16. Room noises can be amplified in a video visit. Avoid shuffling papers, clicking your pen or tapping your feet.
17. If you give a patient instructions for testing, medication or future visits, ask them to repeat back the instructions to ensure that they understand.
18. Allow time at the end of the visit to address patient questions and discuss next steps.
19. Use a patient portal or a fax machine to send the patient a follow-up note summarizing key points from the visit. In the note, reiterate next steps that the patient needs to take, such as completing lab work, scheduling a follow-up visit, taking a new medication, or monitoring symptoms.
20. Make it clear when the visit has ended so that you don’t inadvertently disconnect while the patient is talking.

References

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