

7 Cs Clinical face-face communication during Covid



CONNECT

- Have a visual of you – something that makes you human past the PPE – eg. laminate photo
- Eye contact – only part visible so extra important in forming that connection
- Smile – can be seen in your eyes – the time when lines around your eyes are positive!
- If possible reduce space between patient and you – same eye level – facilitates information sharing
- Check body language – angle towards.



CLEAR/ COHERENT

- Speak clearly – take additional care with diction
- Speak slowly – even when you think are slowing down – slow down more
- Practice with colleagues to identify what pitch of voice works best for you in terms of projection and being understood
- Higher pitches travel less well through mask – be aware that need to have better diction around consonants – eg. f/s/sh/th can get muddled
- Reduce medical speak – evidence that predictable words better heard and understood than non-predictable when wearing masks
- Be aware of speech mannerisms
- Less able to rely on non-verbals to deliver messages – need to be very clear in what you want to know and be known.



CONTACT

- Use touch if possible as a linkage – alongside eye contact will keep the conversation 'bubbled' between you & patient – will aid understanding / increase feelings of safety, trust and reassurance
- If can't touch – proximity can create feeling of contact – body angle more important.



CONCRETE/ CONCISE

- Be focused on what you need to know or what you want to understand
- Short sentences / smaller words
- More frequent check ins – less information giving in bulk
- Don't forget to listen – it's still a 2 way process
- Ask follow up questions / it's ok to ask to repeat / follow up with written information.



CREATIVE

- Be mindful that need alternative communication methods available
- Wipeable whiteboards/ carry pens/ bed spaces should have additional forms of communication
- Use of visuals for common messages
- Interpreter services: Tel: 028 9536 3777
- OOH: 028 9615 8200
- Consider transparent masks if available
- APPS – especially useful in hearing impairment but can be additional support in any conversation eg. Otter.ai (english only) and Live Transcribe (multi-language) – transcribe speech to text.



CALM

- Take time to reassure and connect – distress costs more time
- You will not get all or give all in usual time frame – remove pressure from self and patient
- It will take longer than usual
- Background noise has been found to be more detrimental to understanding speech than masks themselves – so where possible reduce environmental noise factors
- Don't shout – can distort speech quality more and be uncomfortable if wear aids.



COMPASSION SELF & OTHERS

- Everyone is a little more anxious
- Acknowledge 'This is hard'
- 'We will help each other'.