

The Patient Whisperer

- Compassionate Care for Challenging Situations

Two Different Approaches

Cowboys

- Use force
- Fear and domination
- Breaks horse's spirit



Horse Whisperer

- Self-Confident
- Body Language
- Respect/ mutual agreement



Communication

Cowboy

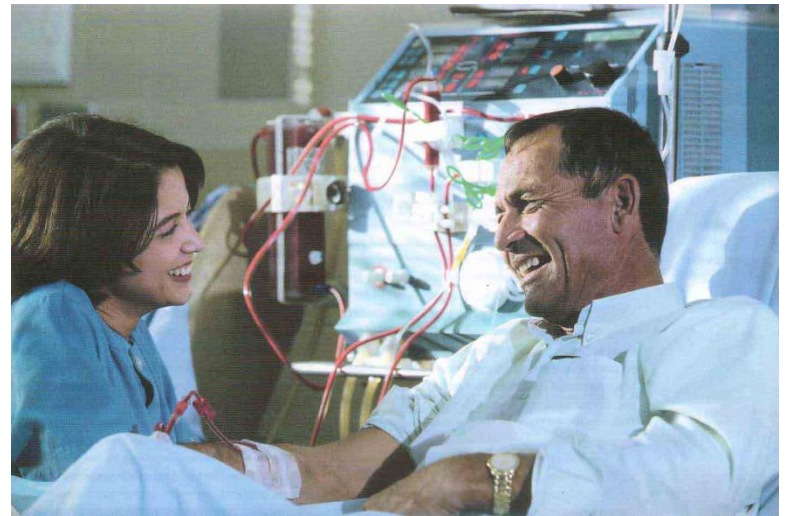
- Dictatorial
- Authoritative
- Brisk
- Harsh
- Impatient
- No-nonsense
- Untrustworthy

Horse Whisperer

- Teams up/joins up
- Calm
- Understands body language
- Dependable
- Trustworthy
- Respectful
- Acceptance

Patient Whisperer

A person who has the ability to **engage** and **empower** patients using interpersonal **communication skills** such as acceptance, honesty and integrity.



Patient Engagement

- Dynamic partnership
- Shared responsibility and accountability
- Building knowledge base
- Information sharing
- Consensus building
- Mutual decision-making



Patient Empowerment

Personal
Control

Responsibility

Initiative

Problem-
solving

Self-
management

Decision –
making

Patient **W**hisperer

Withholds Judgment

- Of self, patients, other staff
- More clarity without judgment
- Power of words (**cranky, nice, stubborn**)
- Gets out of own point of view
(**angry/frustrated still in judgment**)

Our Patients

“Patients with renal disease are challenged by many stressors, including loss of biochemical and physiologic kidney functions, development of digestive and neurological disorders, bone disease and anemia, inability to function in the family and to maintain one’s occupation, decreased mobility, decreased physical and cognitive competence, and loss of sexual function”

Kimmel, MD & Peterson, MD
Seminars in Dialysis, 2005

Patient **W**hisperer

Withholds Judgment

- Of self, patients, other staff
- More clarity without judgment
- Power of words (**cranky, nice, stubborn**)
- Gets out of own point of view
(**angry/frustrated still in judgment**)

Patient **Whisperer**

Has Compassion

- Help ease others' distress
- Connect to what patient is feeling
- Open to hear what is going on with patient
- Focus stays on the patient
(avoid defensiveness)

Patient Whisperer

Insightful

What we see

- Anger
- Hostility
- Aggressiveness
- Anxiety

What it may mean

- Hurt
- Embarrassment
- Inadequacy
- Fear, insecurity

Patient Whisperer

Sensitive

- Filter information through experience, values, fears, assumptions
- Where is patient in cycle of change
(think motivational interviewing)
- Professional boundaries

Patient Whisperer

Positively Reinforces

- Provides positive feedback
- Watch for the behavior or a near behavior
- Look for the opposite of inappropriate behavior
- Works with resistance – not power over

Patient Whisperer

Empowers

- Personal
- Patient/ staff control
- Listens
- Accepts
- Honors
- Questions
- Choices



Patient Whisperer

Respects

- We want to be respected and so do our patients
- We show our respect by our behaviors – verbal and physical
- We listen with purpose
- Focus on the patient's agenda – not ours

Patient Whisperer

Equal Partnership

- Staff issues
- Communication
- Easier to attack than be vulnerable
- Health care team collaboration – whose concerns
- Care Plan Meetings

Patient Whisperer

Relationship Building

- Trust
- Constructive criticism
- Patient motivation
- Staff motivation
- Patient versus Management

Case Examples



The Cowboy

versus

The Whisperer



“ I’m not coming to a care plan meeting”

What’s involved

- How patient is approached
- Patient’s understanding of meeting
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Depression
- Past Experience

Cowboy Approach

- We're doing this for you...
- We can't help you if you don't help yourself.
- You always complain but then you don't want to do anything to make it better...
- We can get in trouble if you don't at least sign the form.



Patient Whisperer Approach

- Shared decision-making to meet needs.
- Educates on the importance of care plans.
- Understands being overwhelmed – asks open-ended questions to guide the patient to choose one issue to work on/change
- Works on goal setting
- Personal invitation to the meeting
- Makes meeting convenient

“ I don't want that tech to stick me!”

What's involved

- Past Experience
- Level of confidence – patient/staff
- Personalities
- Lack of trust

Cowboy Approach

- “You have no choice...”
- “It only took 5 tries -
What’s wrong with you!”
- “You always complain..”
- Why do you whine so
much?



Patient Whisperer Approach

- Understand and accept where patient is
- Collaborate on solution
 - Assign different person
 - Wait for another person
 - Have tech observe “good” stick
 - Have tech stick while observed
 - Self-cannulation
 - Fistula Patient Stories

“What do you mean you’re changing my schedule?”

What’s involved

- Routine
- Fear
- Respect
- Loss of control

Cowboy Approach

- Give schedule change on day of treatment
- “This is your new time – take it or leave it”
- Patient starts missing treatments/ comes late/ or leaves early: Label “non-adherent – **non-compliant**”



Patient Whisperer Approach

- Give information that the schedule process will be changing
- Gather information regarding special needs
- Collaborate to find what will work best

“ I don't have to come all the time– I'll come when I want...”

What's involved

- Denial of need for regular treatment
- Feels too sick to leave home
- Transportation issues
- Time management
- Loss of control

Cowboy Approach

- Threat: " We'll discharge you..."
- Shame: "You know better ..."
- Guilt: "We had your machine set up...someone else wants to come at this time



Patient Whisperer Approach

- Calls / sends letter of concern
- Shares concerns with patient and listens to patient for understanding
- Helps to identify barriers and patient's choices
- Sets boundaries
 - Set up machine *after* patient arrives
 - Change shift
 - Lose shift / call in for time

Tools for Patient Whisperers

Peer Support

DPC Tool Box

DPC Poster

Healthcare Team Agreement

Motivational Interviewing

Coaching Techniques

In-service Training Programs

“It’s a basic right for people to make decisions regarding their own health care treatment. As health care professionals, ... (we) know that education, accessibility and incentives –not brute force- are the best ways to encourage people to comply.”

Barbara Frye

... and being a **Patient Whisperer**



Craig R. Fisher, PhD., L.C.S.W.
Program Manager

317-257-8265
cfisher@nw10.esrd.net