

The Psychological Effects of Physicians' Communication Skills on COVID-19 Patients [Response to Letter]

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Dear editor,

I aspire to address the notes raised in a previous letter by the 4th-year medical students to the editor, and give a vindication of our study, while appreciating the recommendations put forward to refine its methodology. As a representative of the research team, I respect the interest shown by the students in our published work.

First, the definition of “patient’s psychological status” in our study was challenging because of its subjective nature. However, the “patient’s psychological status” was not mentioned, as the students claimed, in the aim of our study at all.

Second, the students in their letter overlooked the guarantee of 248 patient and 72 physician responses from the questionnaire. We allowed patients to assess the communication skills employed and their impact on their healthcare experience, so we could get a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of physician–patient interactions.

Third, the suggestion regarding response bias in self-reporting frameworks is acknowledged. However, we know that such potential discrepancy between submitted answers and actual experiences, as well as the influence of acquiescence bias and recall bias in such kind of questionnaire-based studies are normal, because of that fact that controlling the self-reporting process by any mean is impossible.

We appreciate the recommendation to include specific communication examples used by physicians in the discussion, through thematic analysis. However, we have already provided practical insights for medical educators and healthcare professionals through the text. Specifically, in the discussion and the conclusion sections, we have showed obvious examples of practical communication skills that have showed benefits or drawbacks for both physical and psychological patient outcomes; in addition, we consider the suggested thematic analysis is impractical because of its qualitative nature.

In conclusion, we value the feedback provided by the students and their recognition of the importance of physician communication skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are always committed to take any constructive suggestions into consideration in future research. By doing so, we highly recommend the 4th-year medical students to read our paper thoroughly. Once again, we thank the authors of the letter for their valuable input and their commitment to advancing medical education and patient care.

Disclosure

The author reports no financial or other conflicts of interest in this communication.

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