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**POSTER ABSTRACT****Health Professions Education in the COVID Era – Focus on Communication**

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Helena Ferris<sup>1</sup>, Audrey Devaney1: Health Service Executive, Ireland

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***Introduction***

Effective communication is fundamental to building a successful relationship with patients. However, the COVID pandemic has changed how we deliver healthcare and interact with service users. Necessary safety measures such as social distancing, wearing of personal protective equipment and the increasing use of telehealth has added to the complexity of establishing a positive therapeutic relationship.

***Aims Objectives Theory or Methods***

Healthcare professionals face competing demands of increased clinical productivity while being afforded less physical time with patients. The additional pressures of the pandemic can impact on key aspects of the patient consultation such as building rapport, active listening and shared decision making. Now more than ever, Clinicians need to be adaptable and flexible in their communication with patients, and this should be reflected in how we teach healthcare professionals.

***Highlights or Results or Key Findings***

Communicating with patients in an open and companionate manner enables Clinicians to elicit information to accurately diagnose and treat patients, while building trust and mutual respect. The COVID pandemic has highlighted the need for effective communication across all age groups, gender, cultural backgrounds and varying levels health literacy. The 'RESPECT' model (1) can help bridge disparities between patient and Clinicians. The RESPECT model is a widely used toolkit for patient centred care. It focuses on 7 core components: Rapport, Empathy, Support, Partnership, Explanation, Cultural Competency and Trust. Additional training in the use of this model may assist Clinicians in navigating new ways of interacting with patients. Simple measures such as planning the structure of a consultation, using an established framework for virtual consultations and encouraging patients to write down questions in advance can help focus the consultation and ensure topics important to the patient are discussed.

***Conclusions***

Effective communication is fundamental to providing high quality patient centered care. The current COVID pandemic can impede communication owing to additional time constraints, staff shortages, physical barriers such as personal protective equipment and the increasing use of telehealth.

***Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations***

It is essential that we adapt to the new healthcare environment and strive to maintain high standards of communication.

(1)Mutha, S., Allen, C. & Welch M. (2002). Towards culturally competent care: A Toolbox for Teaching Communication Strategies. San Francisco, CA. Centre for Health Professions, University of California, San Francisco.