Question Formats: Delgado - Episode #1

One of the many goals of patient-centered interviewing is to strengthen patients’ sense of self-efficacy and their feeling of responsibility, as well as to share “power” with them to increase their sense of autonomy. Research has demonstrated that these are essential components to positive patient outcomes. Liberal use of open-ended questioning and appropriate use of closed-ended question formats can encourage these feelings in patients.

Useful Definitions

- **Open-ended questions**: Inquiries that require more than a “yes or no” or brief response.
  - Examples: “What brings you in today?”, “Tell me what I can to do help you today?”, “What about this is most troubling to you?”
  - Why use open-ended questions: This question format allows the interviewer to gain insight into the patients’ perspective of the problem, and allows the patient some control over the visit content.

- **Closed-ended questions**: Inquiries that required only a short response (e.g. yes/no).
  - Examples: “When did you first notice these symptoms?”, “Have you been experiencing nausea or vomiting?”, “Do you have a family history of diabetes?”
  - Why use closed-ended questions: This question format allows the interviewer to collect specific, detailed information in a brief amount of time.

***Note: Interviewers should balance the use of open-ended and close-ended questioning formats. However, open-ended questions should be used almost exclusively at the beginning of the interview to build rapport and good communication.***

Recommended Reading:

Smith, RC. Patient-Centered Interviewing: An Evidence-Based Method. 2nd ed. Philadelphia (PA): Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2002, Chapter 2
Discussion Questions

1) Heather begins the interview by asking Mr. Delgado “What brings you here today?” (3:10).
   • What type of question is this (e.g. open-ended, closed-ended)?
   • What is the difference between close-ended and open-ended questions?

2) Heather begins the doctor-centered interviewing style (3:19, roughly 34 seconds into the interaction) when she asks Mr. Delgado four related questions:
   1. “How have you been feeling?”
   2. “So no problems?”
   3. “Do you have any medical problems?”
   4. “So no body has ever told you that you have something wrong with you?”

   Mr. Delgado responds to each question by indicating that he is healthy.
   • What impact do you think this directive interview approach had on rapport?
   • Do you think this is an effective way to begin building rapport? If not, how would you do things differently?
   • Do you think Mr. Delgado feels like he is being heard and respected?

3) Heather asks several closed-ended questions early in the interview about (4:22) alcohol use, drug use, and smoking status. In listening to Mr. Delgado’s answers, is there any evidence to suggest that he is defensive about his behaviors? If so, how might Heather have avoided such a defensive response style?

4) Roughly 4 minutes into the interaction (7:15), Heather’s interview style changes. Heather’s rate of speech increases, she quickly changes the direction of the interaction (initiates the physical exam), and cuts the patient short. This rapid change in demeanor is not likely to improve rapport, patient autonomy, or patient satisfaction with the interaction. How would you change this interaction to maintain/build rapport with the patient, while still completing the medical visit objectives?

5) At the end of the interview it is clear that Mr. Delgado and Heather are not seeing eye-to-eye in terms of the importance of testing.
   • What open or closed-ended questions might Heather have asked to determine why Mr. Delgado is resistant to testing?
• How can she acquire more information from Mr. Delgado and at the same time build rapport and help him feel “in control” of his health care?

6) Heather jumps to closed-ended questions very early in the interaction. Do you think that this doctor-patient interaction would have been different if open-ended questions had been used for the first several minutes of the interaction?