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Staff Education to Use the Teach-Back Method Toward Increasing Adherence to Medications in a Mental Health Clinic

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Executive Summary: Staff Education Project

Staff Education to Use the Teach-Back Method Toward Increasing Adherence to
Medications in a Mental Health Clinic

by

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Summary

A staff development project was conducted at a mental health clinic to improve medication adherence among patients. The intervention was an evidence-based presentation on the teach-back method for staff members to educate them about the importance of using the teach-back method for patient teaching to increase medication adherence among mental health patients. The gap identified by leadership was that staff members are often unaware of strategies for patient education designed to ensure that patients take their medications as prescribed by the provider. The project was conducted over a period of 4 weeks, with sessions held 3 days per week, taking staff schedules into account. The question which guided the project was as follows: For staff in a mental health clinic, will an evidence-based presentation on the teach-back method increase knowledge towards the goal of increasing adherence to medicine prescriptions? The materials used during staff teaching included a slide presentation, along with other resources such as videos and role-play practice. A 10-item pre- and post-questionnaire was developed in collaboration with leadership and used to compare scores and gauge knowledge acquisition (see Appendix A). Results showed that participants' mean scores improved 70% from their prescores, highlighting that the intervention was effective, with a 100% learning score from staff after training. I recommended to leadership that the training be held on a regular basis and especially at the orientation of new staff. Providing effective teaching methods can bring social change in the healthcare community by recognizing individual patient needs, improving mental health outcomes, and promoting patients' participation in their treatment plans.

Background

The purpose of the project was to help staff provide education for their patients. In mental health settings, there is an increased need for patients to have psychoeducation about their illness and the treatment they are receiving. Severe mental illnesses like depression and personality disorders require complete adherence to treatment and especially medication, because it helps to lower the intensity of symptoms in patients. Medication adherence in psychopharmacological treatment is defined as the number of drugs taken relative to those prescribed to patients (Marrero et al., 2020). The negative consequences of not taking prescribed medicines on time often lead to relapse and the severity of the illness. Clinicians and staff working in mental health settings must understand what personal factors of the patients are leading to nonadherence to treatment. It also increases the burden on the healthcare system, as clinical outcomes are negatively affected. Other factors, such as financial situation, level of rapport with therapists, and patients' insights into medication, can influence medication adherence (Deng et al., 2022).

One way clinicians and primary care providers in mental health clinics can address this problem is by providing education to patients using a specific teaching method. One of them is the teach-back method, which is used with patients in many healthcare organizations. It involves an evidence-based training method that improves the patient's understanding through mutual discussion (Zabolypour et al., 2020). This method can be performed individually, both face-to-face and through body language, and requires the patient to repeat their understanding of what they have been taught. The teach-back

method is known to be effective across multiple health care settings and with a wide range of populations (Talevsk et al., 2020).

The application of this teaching method is important to ensure that patients have a clear understanding of their illness and condition. Nursing interventions help to improve patient satisfaction and the quality of care being provided (Nickles et al., 2020). Nurses who are equipped to care for diverse patients significantly enhance health outcomes, and by using this method, they can assist their patients in taking better care of themselves. It is also essential that the environment in which nurse-patient interactions occur is comfortable and healing. For healthcare workers, providing the maximum comfort to patients is a universal goal (Alharbi, 2025). Thus, when nurses help patients understand their symptoms in a simple manner, they need to ensure the setting is not a barrier to teaching.

The teach-back method can be used in various ways. For example, when patients undergo highly complex surgical procedures, nurses should explain the implications of the procedure in simple terms using the teach-back method. When a patient understands their condition and the treatment being administered, they will easily give consent. It has been supported by research that using feedback and teach back methods interventions helps to improve patient comprehension as compared to the standard procedures of taking informed consent (Glaser et al., 2020).

Various factors need to be considered when implementing the back method with patients in clinical care settings. A patient's age and cultural background are important factors in determining the effectiveness of interventions. Especially among older adults, health literacy is limited, which has been linked to poor well-being (Kim & Oh, 2020).

Since their memory and cognition may be limited, it can be difficult for nurses to perform the teach-back method. Nurses can then take appropriate measures to ensure they listen properly, so they can repeat what is being explained to them. Similarly, in children, the teach-back method should use the simplest terms consistent with the child's developmental milestones. This can help the child understand conversations smoothly without confusion. Healthcare professionals play a key role in pediatric cases, facilitating care and involving the child in making their own care decisions (Bawah et al., 2023).

Cultural diversity and awareness are also important while providing information to patients. When nurses have respect and understanding of different cultures, they can effectively assess patients' behavioral patterns and improve health outcomes (Kondo et al., 2025). Cultural competence is thus important for nurses so they can communicate more easily with patients. The teach-back method can therefore be effective in addressing the diverse needs of people by explaining the importance of taking medications on time to improve adherence.

A gap in practice was identified at the clinic due to the limited application of this method in mental health settings. Staff, nurses, and other professionals working with mentally ill patients do not regularly utilize this method because they usually have time restraints or less organizational support and training. To improve staff understanding of increasing patient adherence to medical treatment, a staff education project was developed to improve patient understanding and health outcomes. The project question stated the following: For staff in a mental health clinic, will an evidence-based intervention presentation in the teach back method increase knowledge towards the goal of improved adherence to medication prescription?

Staff Education Project Development

The objective of the program was to improve staff use of the teach-back method, which can be implemented to educate patients. This project was made explicitly for mental health staff, and the participants included clinical directors, office managers, and trainers. All participants worked in a mental health setting and interacted with patients regularly as part of their job. The training was delivered to participants over 4 weeks, with 3 meetings per week, for a total of 14 training sessions (see Appendix B).

Prior to the project, authorization and permission were obtained from the organization to conduct the whole process. Questionnaires were designed to gather information on the teach-back method and to gain an understanding of the participants. The pre-/post- questions were designed in collaboration with clinic leadership and used evidence-based information on the teach-back technique. Before the start of training, the pretest was given to the participants to assess their current understanding of the teach-back method. The test was then repeated at the end of training to assess how much participants learned about the intervention. The posttest evaluation included feedback to gauge whether participants were satisfied with the knowledge provided.

Results

The results showed that all staff and nursing participants improved their knowledge about the teach-back training method. Compared to the pretest, posttest results showed an increase in understanding of how to conduct the education technique with patients. Results showed 70% of the staff increased their knowledge after this training, since the pretest score was 30%, and the final score after the posttest increased to 100%. The findings are consistent with previous research indicating that the teach-

back method enhances nurses' communication skills (see Alishahi et al., 2021). When nurses know how to educate their patients to take their medications on time, it helps heal them faster and enhances their self-management skills. This can overall improve the functioning of the mental health care system, leading to increased medication adherence and better nurse-patient relationships.

In the pretest period, nurses were unsure of the information they had about the teach-back method. Especially regarding the five steps of teach back, they demonstrated confusion and awareness. They also omitted a few questions for which they had no answers, which led to a low overall mean score for nurses. All participants gave a correct response to the question "What percentage of patients forget the healthcare information after instructions are given?" because this question was based on their personal experience working as nurses in a mental health setting, rather than the teach-back method. However, significant improvements were seen when nurses were given the same questionnaire in the posttest (see Appendix A). Participants answered correctly in almost all the questions. Two participants answered all 10 questions, earning a full score, indicating that the training program was highly effective in improving nurses' education on the teach-back method. It improved their communication through mutual discussion, using different resources, and performing role-plays as examples to practice the teach-back technique in real life with their patients.

The feedback form was also given to participants to gauge their perception of the training provided by the staff. All participants showed positive results when explaining the feedback and expressed their gratitude for the program's purpose. They responded positively to the content and presentation, as well as the materials used to educate

participants about the teach-back method. In the long term, they will be able to apply their learnings in mental health practice settings, using the five steps of the teach method. This can significantly help to improve medication adherence in patients suffering from psychiatric illnesses.

Conclusions

The project was about teaching staff members the teach-back method and how to use it with mental health patients. The project approach was an educational presentation (see Appendix B). The teach-back method is used to improve medication adherence in various settings. By having patients repeat what they understood, nurses can enhance their learning about their prescribed drugs and ensure they follow their prescriptions on time. Thus, nurses and medical staff should be adequately trained to apply teach-back with their patients, helping them with psychoeducation. The results indicated that, compared with the pretest scores, nurses improved their learning as measured by the posttest questionnaire. They expressed their willingness and appreciation for the educational initiative. The staff expressed that similar projects and initiatives should be implemented in mental health clinics to remind staff of the importance of effective teaching methods for working with mental health patients. This can also bring social change in the healthcare community by recognizing patient needs, improving health outcomes, and promoting diversity and inclusion in treatment techniques.

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Appendix A: Pre- and Post-Questionnaire

Multiple choice questions:

1. What is the Teach-Back Method?

- A- A program that focuses on disease prevention.
- B- A system that assesses and analyzes clinical performance.
- C- A communication strategy is used to ensure a person understands the information they are given.
- D- A legal principle relevant to nursing practice.

2. What are some benefits of the Teach-Back Method? Select all that apply:

- A- Engaged learning.
- B- Confidence building.
- C- Navigate economic factors.
- D- Better understanding.
- E- Increased retention.

3. What is the first step in implementing the Teach-Back Method during staff training?

- A- Advocate for positive change.
- B- Introduce the concept.
- C- Participate in conferences.
- D- Use financial data.

4. What percentage of patients forgot the healthcare information after instructions were given?

- A- 95%
- B- 50%
- C- 80%
- D- 10%

5. What is an example of evidence discussed during the presentation?

- A- Health care staff could more easily identify when patients did not understand.
- B- Teach-Back does not reduce hospital readmissions.
- C- The teach-back method is a costly communication tool.
- D- The Teach-Back Method does not improve communication.

6. What are the five steps of Teach-Back?

- A- Check understanding, close the loop, use simple terms, identify, repeat.
- B- Use simple terms, check understanding, clarify, re-check and re-clarify, and close the loop.
- C- Explain a complex case until the end, ask questions, close the loop, repeat, re-check.
- D- Provide samples, assuming their baseline, check, repeat, and clarify.

7. What is a simple term that is preferred to be used during teaching for hypertension?

- A- High Blood pressure
- B- Chronic low pressure
- C- Low blood pressure
- D- Swelling

8. Which patient population benefits most from the Teach-Back Method?

- A- Only patients with low health literacy.
- B- Only elderly patients.
- C- All patients, regardless of literacy or background.
- D- Only non-English speaking patients.

9. What is a consideration to take when teaching older adults?

- A- Speak very loudly, high-pitched voice.
- B- Minimize background noise.

- C- Provide more than one new piece of information during each visit.
- D- Does not offer medical translation services.

10. What is a consideration to take when teaching children?

- A- Teach different activities at the same time.
 - B- Include children in developmentally appropriate conversations.
 - C- Do not allow children to engage in conversations.
- Do not explain the topic in detail.

Post questionnaire

- 1. How satisfied are you with the *content* of the educational session?**
 - a. Dissatisfied*
 - b. Very Satisfied*

- 2. How satisfied are you with the *presentation* of the content?**
 - a. Dissatisfied*
 - b. Very Satisfied*

- 3. How likely are you to implement what you learned in your daily practice?**
 - a. Not at All Likely*
 - b. Extremely Likely)*

Appendix B: Staff Presentation

TEACH-BACK METHOD

YANYSEL GONZALEZ TORRES PMHNP-BC

PURPOSE OF TRAINING

- Explain and demonstrate the Teach-Back Method, identifying current methods, or practices that need to be improved to increase patient compliance with treatment plan
- Answer questions from staff during training

INTRODUCTION

- The **Teach-Back Method** is a communication strategy used to ensure that staff (or patients, in healthcare settings) understand the information they've been given.
- It's a way to confirm understanding by having them "teach back" the information in their own words.

BENEFITS OF THE TEACH-BACK METHOD FOR STAFF TRAINING:

- **Increased retention:** Teaching others helps reinforce the information.
- **Better understanding:** Identifies knowledge gaps early so they can be addressed before mistakes are made.
- **Engaged learning:** Encourages active participation rather than passive listening.

STEPS FOR IMPLEMENTING TEACH-BACK IN STAFF TRAINING:

- **Introduce the Concept**
- **Engage in Active Dialogue**
- **Provide Feedback**
- **Create a Supportive Environment**

TEACH-BACK METHOD IMPLEMENTATION:

- Demonstrate the Teach-Back Method with a volunteer, asking this person to explain back key instructions.
- After explaining the instructions, the staff member asks the patient to repeat the key points. Patient should say the information in their own words.
- After each role-play, give constructive feedback on how the Teach-Back method was used.

IMPLEMENTATION:

- Have a group discussion about possible barriers that might come up when using Teach-Back Method, such as patient embarrassment, language barriers, or time constraints.
- Ask the group to produce strategies to overcome these barriers, such as using visual aids, simplifying language, or ensuring a private, comfortable setting for discussions.

TEACH –BACK, WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

- Teach-back can help prevent gaps in understanding of health information.
- Teach-back involves clients repeating back information in their own words.
- Reduced medication errors after medication changes.

5 STEPS OF TEACH-BACK

- Use simple terms to explain or demonstrate
- Check understanding: ask the staff to repeat back in their own words.
- Clarify: identify and re-explain any misunderstanding
- Re-check and re-clarify: repeat steps 2 and 3 until no misunderstandings.
- Close the loop: once all misunderstandings are clarified, ask the person to repeat everything back in their own words.

USING SIMPLE TERMS FOR MEDICAL WORDS

Medical Jargon	Simple Term
Benign	Not Harmful
Chronic	Long term, ongoing
Hypertension	High Blood Pressure
Incision	Cut
Inflammation	Sore, swelling

IDENTIFY THE STAFF LEARNING STYLE

- Discuss the preferred method for the information to be provided
- Audio instead of writing
- Using pictures
- Writing their own notes
- Sharing stories and ideas with others.

CONSIDERATIONS BASED ON AGE

- **Considerations with older adults:** minimize background noise due to mild or moderate hearing impairments.
- **Considerations with children:** include child in developmentally appropriate conversations
- **Considerations with language diversity:** offer medical translation services.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

- Be patient and encourage open communication.
- Ensure that the staff feels supported and knows that their understanding is key to successful performance.
- Use visual aids or checklists if necessary to help reinforce what's being taught.

RESOURCES TO REVIEW:

- <https://youtu.be/pCNCqA5LqFo>
- [Teach-Back-Toolkit_for-website_Sept-2021.pdf](#)
- [Teach-Back: Intervention | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)
- https://youtu.be/puyNz4f_J3o

Thank you sincerely for attending this training.