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Commentary

Patient viewing sessions: the patient experience

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Abstract

Background

Dermatology grand rounds and clinical conferences often include patient viewing sessions, during which groups of dermatologists and trainees see and discuss patient cases.

Objective

To understand experiences and attitudes of patients participating in patient viewing sessions.

Methods

Questionnaires were given to patients immediately before and after patient viewing sessions and by mail 3 months after participating in patient viewing sessions.

Results

Fifty one individuals responded to the survey during patient viewing sessions and 15 (29.4%) responded to the delayed survey three months after the patient viewing session. Of these, 98% and 80% of patients responded that grand rounds met their expectations in the immediate and 3 month surveys, respectively.

Conclusions

Dermatology patient viewing sessions are valuable and satisfying for patients.

Introduction

Grand rounds (GR) evolved from bedside rounds and have been an integral component of medical education since the late 19th century [1, 2]. Although this model has been less popular in many disciplines of medicine, patient viewing remains an integral part of dermatology grand rounds [1-3].

During GR, dermatologists and trainees see patients referred for assistance with diagnosis or treatment and educational interest. Patient viewing sessions comprising GR represents a core component of dermatology resident education and GR has been identified as one of the most outstanding educational conferences by program directors and chief residents in a 2006 survey [4]. Patient viewing is also part of regional and national dermatology meetings [5].

We performed a survey of patients participating in patient viewing sessions to ascertain their expectations prior to patient viewing sessions, their experience of the patient viewing session, and their assessment of whether their expectations were met.

Methods

Surveys were administered to 51 consecutive patients before, immediately after, and 3 months after participating in patient viewing sessions at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), the Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH), and the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH; N=28), or the patient viewing sessions associated with the 2011 American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) Summer Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts (N=23). The patient experience should not have differed significantly between the grand rounds sessions and the 2011 AAD Summer Meeting, as the AAD patient viewing took place at BIDMC and all participating patients were treated by dermatologists at BIDMC. This study was approved by the BIDMC IRB.

Results

Participant characteristics

The patients included in this study were 62.7% male and 37.3% female. Most participants were between 20 years of age and 49 years of age (64.7%).

Pre-viewing session patient survey (Table 1)

When asked about their motivations for participating in a patient viewing session, 20% responded that they were there for diagnosis, 36% responded that they were there for treatment options, 20% responded that they were there to teach others about their interesting skin condition, and 24% responded that they were there for a combination of diagnosis, treatment, and interest. Overall, 50% cited diagnosis and 96.1% cited treatment as a reason for attending.

In our population, 98% of patients anticipated that they would be seen by many physicians at GR and most responded that they were comfortable with this (86.2% either agreed or strongly agreed). In addition, 98% of patients either agreed or strongly agreed that there would be a large group discussion about their case, and 68.6% agreed or strongly agreed that they would learn of alternative treatment options. Almost all (98%) of the patients surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that GR represents a good opportunity for patients.

Immediate post-viewing session patient survey (Table 2)

Most patients felt that they were gowned properly and that the room accommodations were comfortable (81.7% and 98% agreed or strongly agreed, respectively). More than 90% of individuals agreed or strongly agreed that they had adequate privacy and more than 95% agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated professionally and respectfully.

Furthermore, 98% of patients either agreed or strongly agreed that the number of physicians in their room at once was appropriate and only 18% either agreed or strongly agreed that they would have preferred fewer. Most patients estimated that there were either 3-4 or 5-6 physicians in their room at any given time (42% each). All patients responded that at least 50% of physicians greeted them upon entering and 58% said that greater than 90% did so. Approximately a third of patients noted that physicians had side conversations in their rooms, but 69.5% either agreed or strongly agreed that they were comfortable with this behavior. In

addition, 98% either agreed or strongly agreed that they liked having physicians ask questions during GR. Most patients either agreed or strongly agreed (72%) that they would be interested in participating in the conversation after the patient viewing session.

A majority of patients either agreed or strongly agreed that GR strengthened their relationship with their physician (61.2%) and that they enjoyed participating in medical education (94%). Finally, 96% agreed that GR was a positive experience overall, 98% responded that it met their expectations, and 94% agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend participating.

Delayed (three months, mailed) post-viewing session patient survey (Table 3)

Of the 51 surveys mailed to patients several weeks after participation in grand rounds, 15 (29.4%) were returned. Of these, 80% of patients responded that the experience met their expectation and 100% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt comfortable during GR.

Three months after participation, almost three quarters (73.4%) of patients agreed or strongly agreed that attending GR helped formulate a diagnosis or treatment option for their skin condition and over half (53.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that their skin diagnosis was made because of their participation in GR. Over 50% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their skin condition improved because of their participation in GR. Interestingly, 86.6% of patients either agreed or strongly agreed that patients should be invited to attend the discussion following the patient viewing session. An overwhelming majority of patients continued to find patient viewing a positive and worthwhile experience that they would recommend to other patients.

Discussion

Fifty-one patients participating in viewing sessions at our institutions (N=28) or the 2011 AAD Summer Meeting at BIDMC (N=23) were surveyed. Prominent motivations for patients attending GR were diagnosis and treatment. Interestingly, although 98% indicated that the number of physicians in their room was appropriate, 18% indicated that they would have preferred fewer. This suggests that a smaller number of individuals in the room at once may be ideal. In the delayed survey, patients continued to feel positively about their GR experience and a majority felt that their skin condition had either been diagnosed or had improved owing to their participation.

Overwhelmingly, patients expressed an interest in being present for the discussion, highlighting their interest in engaging with their physicians regarding their medical care. However, patients are not routinely invited to participate in the discussion following viewing sessions in any of the institutions included in this study, at regional and national meetings that include patient viewing sessions, or, to our knowledge, in any academic dermatology department in the United States. Coordinating the presence of the appropriate patient would be logistically challenging. Additionally, given that GR represents an important educational activity for trainees and faculty, cases are often discussed quickly and with jargon, potentially making these sessions inaccessible and confusing to some patients.

Our study has several important limitations. Our study only included patients treated in three academic medical centers in Boston, Massachusetts. Our sample size was rather small and our response rate for the delayed patient survey (29.4%) was low. We are also only ascertaining opinions of patients who were willing to participate in viewing sessions, who may be more likely to be comfortable with the activities involved as they were explained to patients, before agreeing to participate. Finally, our data was from a study completed in 2011. The grand rounds practices at our institutions have not changed appreciably since 2011, so it is unlikely that our results would be different in 2015.

Conclusions

Patient viewing sessions are valuable opportunities for patients, and most patients indicated that they were satisfied with the experience.

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Table 1: Patient Pre-Viewing Session Results.

	Male 19 (37.3%)	Female 32 (62.7%)						
Age	9 or less 0	10-19 3 (5.9%)	20-29 13 (25.5%)	30-39 9 (17.6%)	40-49 11 (21.6%)	50-59 5 (9.8%)	60-69 8 (15.7%)	70 or more 2 (3.9%)
I have chosen to participate in Grand Rounds because	My doctor and I are interested in seeking the opinion of other dermatologists for diagnosis of my skin condition.	My doctor and I know my diagnosis but are interested in seeking the opinion of other of other dermatologists for treatment of my skin condition	I have an interesting and/or rare skin condition that my doctor and I would like to teach to others.	Other	Diagnosis and Treatment	Treatment and Interest	Diagnosis, Treatment, Interest	Diagnosis, Interest, Other
Please rate the level of your agreement with each of the following statements	Strongly Agree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5			
I was contacted by a physician or resident prior to attending grand rounds	0	0	1 (2%)	6 (11.8%)	44 (86.2%)			
I attended grand rounds today to obtain a diagnosis for my skin condition	7 (14%)	11 (22%)	7 (14%)	8 (16%)	17 (34%)			
I attended grand rounds today to learn about treatment options for my skin condition	0	2 (3.9%)	1 (2%)	13 (25.5%)	36 (70.6%)			
I will be seen by many dermatologists today	0	0	1 (2%)	9 (17.6%)	41 (80.4%)			
I feel comfortable with being seen by a group of physicians	0	1 (2%)	6 (11.8%)	9 (17.6%)	35 (68.6%)			
Doctors will discuss my case as a group to determine the best treatment plan	0	0	1 (2%)	14 (27.4%)	36 (70.6%)			
I will receive alternative treatment options as a result of the session	0	1 (2%)	15 (29.4%)	12 (23.5%)	23 (45.1%)			
Participating in Grand Rounds is a good opportunity for patients	0	0	1 (2%)	14 (27.4%)	36 (70.6%)			

Table 2: Immediate Patient Post- Viewing Session Results.

Please rate the level of your agreement with each of the following statements	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5	Not Applicable
I received an appropriate patient gown and/or cover-up garments	0	1 (2%)	2 (4.1%)	9 (18.4%)	31 (63.3%)	6 (12.2%)
The room accommodations were comfortable	0	1 (2%)	0	11 (22%)	38 (76%)	0
There was an appropriate number of physicians in my room at a given time	0	0	1 (2%)	16 (32%)	33 (66%)	0
I would have preferred to have fewer physicians in my room at a given time	20 (40%)	13 (26%)	8 (16%)	5 (10%)	4 (8%)	0
I had adequate privacy during grand rounds	0	0	4 (8.2%)	18 (36.7%)	27 (55.1%)	0
I was treated in a professional manner	0	0	2 (4%)	9 (18%)	39 (78%)	0
I was treated with respect	0	0	1 (2%)	8 (16%)	41 (82%)	0
I felt comfortable during grand rounds	0	0	0	14 (28%)	36 (72%)	0
I liked that physicians asked me questions during grand rounds	0	0	1 (2%)	9 (18%)	40 (80%)	0
Physicians held side conversations while in my room	12 (24%)	10 (20%)	12 (24%)	12 (24%)	4 (8%)	0
I feel comfortable with physicians having side conversations while present in my room	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	12 (24.5%)	14 (28.6%)	20 (40.9%)	1 (2%)
This experience strengthened my relationship with my physician (s)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	17 (34.7%)	12 (24.5%)	18 (36.7%)	0
I enjoyed participating in medical education	0	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	16 (32%)	30 (60%)	0
Participating in grand rounds was a positive experience	0	0	2 (4%)	16 (32%)	32 (64%)	0
Overall, grand rounds was a worthwhile experience for me	0	0	5 (10%)	11 (22%)	34 (68%)	0
I would recommend participation in grand rounds to other patients	1 (2%)	0	2 (4%)	16 (32%)	31 (62%)	0
I would be interested in attending the physician discussion session following grand rounds (this is where your case is discussed for diagnosis and management)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	10 (20%)	9 (18%)	27 (54%)	0
Estimate how many physicians were in your room simultaneously	Less than 3 3 (6%)	3-4 21 (42%)	5-6 21 (42%)	7-9 3 (6%)	10 or more 2 (4%)	
Did you feel comfortable with the number of physician present in your room?	Yes 48 (96%)	No 1 (2%)				
Approximately what percentage of physicians greeted you?	Less than 25 0	25-50 0	51-75 9 (18%)	76-90 12 (24%)	Greater than 90 29 (58%)	
Did your experience at grand rounds meet your expectations?	Yes 49 (98%)	No 1 (2%)				

Table 3: Three-Month Delayed (Mailed) Patient Post-Viewing Session Results.

Did you receive follow-up communication after grand rounds from a physician/resident to discuss your condition?	Yes 14 (93.3%)	No 1 (6.7%)			
Did this feedback meet your expectations?	Yes 13 (86.7%)	No 2 (13.3%)			
Please rate the level of your agreement with each of the following statements	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
I was contacted in a timely manner following grand rounds	1 (6.7%)	0	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.6%)	9 (60%)
The physician/resident who called me was knowledgeable about my case	0	0	1 (6.7%)	6 (40%)	8 (53.3%)
Coming to grand rounds helped to formulate a diagnosis and/or treatment options for my skin condition	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	1 (6.7%)	4 (26.7%)	7 (46.7%)
Participating in grand rounds made me feel better about my skin condition	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)	2 (13.3%)	6 (40%)	9 (26.7%)
My skin condition was diagnosed because of my participation in grand rounds	3 (23.1%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (7.7%)	2 (15.4%)	5 (38.5%)
Participating in grand rounds improved the treatment options available for my skin condition	1 (7.1%)	2 (14.3%)	0	7 (15%)	4 (28.6%)
My skin condition improved because of my participation in grand rounds	2 (14.1%)	1 (7.1%)	3 (21.4%)	4 (28.6%)	4 (28.6%)
This experience strengthened my relationship with my physicians	1 (6.7%)	0	4 (26.7%)	6 (40%)	4 (26.7%)
Participating in grand rounds was a positive experience	1 (6.7%)	0	0	7 (46.7%)	7 (46.7%)
Overall, grand rounds was a worthwhile experience for me	1 (6.7%)	0	0	5 (33.3%)	9 (60%)
I would recommend participation to other patients	0	0	1 (6.7%)	5 (33.3%)	9 (60%)
Patients should be invited to attend the physician discussion session following grand rounds	0	0	2 (13.3%)	5 (33.3%)	8 (53.3%)
Did your experience at grand rounds meet your expectations?	Yes 12	No 3			