

Pediatrician Discourse Community

Introduction

This paper investigates the discourse of pediatricians and how these individuals read, write, and verbally communicate amongst each other. I've always been interested in becoming a pediatrician because I'm really fond of children and enjoy biology. This discourse requires an extensive degree of reading and writing; whether it may be reading medical journals or writing letters to insurance companies. Communication between a pediatrician and their patients is also crucial because their patients are between the ages of 0-18 years old and are generally accompanied by a guardian. Being able to sympathize with the patients and adhere to their needs is important in order to ensure proper care and treatment. The objective of this research paper is to identify and prove the importance of reading, writing, and oral communication within the pediatrics discourse and to better prepare myself for this potential career path.

A. Discourse Community

A discourse is referred to as a group or community of people that write and speak in a similar language. After enrolling in UWP 1, I've realized the significance of being able to identify different forms of communication and words attached to specific discourses and their importance. Among teachers, who greatly influence our children, "obstetricians and pediatricians enter the life of the child either very soon after birth or in the early stages of pregnancy" (Melby et al., 673). Visiting the pediatrician when you have a new-born is a routine event because this is when the child's health is the most fragile. It is the doctor's job to be able to accurately document the child's health through medical charts and. In my study, I will be examining literacy within the discourse of pediatricians because I believe it will give me a clear overview of what literacy skills I need to develop in order to excel in this career path.

While only being a freshman, I feel that my knowledge and research tactics within the discourse of pediatrics will be limited to the people that I interact with and the articles I am able to read. I have some brief knowledge of health literacy that I picked up from volunteering at a pediatrics hospital during high school. I plan to gather information from other individuals who are more knowledgeable in this field in order to write an informative and factual research paper.

To begin my research, I asked my younger brother a question regarding literacy in the pediatrics discourse because he is an adolescent with an extremely limited perspective on what kinds of reading and writing goes on in this field. When asked, “what reading and writing techniques do you think pediatricians have to do in order to do their job?” He responded with, “I think that they read about the patient’s health history and what is wrong with them and then they write about the effects of the medication they will give the patients.” After talking to my younger brother, I realized how most people really don’t understand the degree of reading and writing that pediatricians truly do. With thorough research and investigation, I plan to hopefully disprove this common misunderstanding.

B. Written Communication

Within the pediatrics discourse, written communication is becoming much more important as technology is advancing and prescriptions and letters are being sent via email rather than being handwritten. In most doctor’s offices now, doctors fill in medical charts virtually on a computer since it is quicker. It is becoming more important to be literate in online word processors and online organizers such as excel. The world needs doctors who are not only good readers and writers, but who are able to adjust and succeed in different literacy situations because those individuals will be the ones who are able to best understand and treat patients.

As a pediatrician, one will be expected to write letters to insurance companies so that they can cover their part of the payment for the patient’s treatment. It is important to be able to

read clearly and carefully, so to not make any mistakes that could result in the insurance company not paying their share. On top of having to communicate with insurance companies, pediatricians have to talk to pharmacies to ensure that they have the necessary medication to provide to their patients. Being able to not only write professionally and appropriately, but communicate in a friendly manner on the phone is so crucial.

Pediatricians, like any other doctor will deal with patients with all different kinds of backgrounds. It is so important that whatever document or form the hospital or pediatrician provides the parent or guardian of the child with is in simple language. According to a study done by the American Academy of Family Physicians, “approximately one half of adults are unable to understand printed health care material...” (Safeer et al., 1). Pediatricians have a tough job at hand, not only do they have to write letters to doctors and companies, but they also have to write letters to the families, but in a completely different style and language. This further stresses the significance of communication between the doctor and patient.

C. Reading

Being able to read is probably one of the most important requirements of any job there is in the world. However, the reading requirements that a doctor goes much further than just reading the patient’s medical history. As a pediatrician, it is important to be aware of the changes going on in modern medicine; there are constantly new findings and research that is being done. According to journal entry by the “Journal of Royal Society of Medicine,” reading medical journals “... affect how doctors treat patients and the actions take by public health authorities, they also influence how we think about birth, death, pain, and sickness” (Smith). Medical journals are so useful to doctors because it is a guide on how to prepare and handle different health situations and epidemics. A pediatrician will be able to enhance their intellect by constantly reading and trying to learn more about their field of study.

D. Oral Communication

Pediatricians have to be able to communicate with patients of all different types of backgrounds, whether it may be through a different language or text. Being bilingual helps a lot in any field of medicine because it eliminates language barriers. It's important to be able to diagnosis patients in an understandable language because not all patients or guardians have the same literacy abilities. While pediatricians treat child, they also have to ensure that the adult present has a clear understanding of how to follow up with whatever necessary treatment is suggested.

Communication between the pediatrician and their co-workers is valued as well because together they all play a part in the patient's health. Sometimes doctors communicate directly with a medical scribe during the check-up procedure. A medical scribe is an individual who specializes in charting physician-patient encounters during medical examinations. While a pediatrician is communicating with the patient during the diagnosis, it is important that they are able to adhere and properly communicate with their medical scribe in order to document factual information.

Research Question

Most students who are interested in a pre-med or pre-health career path don't necessarily take into consideration that becoming a doctor is a lot more work than prescribing medications and doing routine check ups. Through my research, I hope to provide evidence demonstrating the need and importance of reading, writing, and oral literacy amongst this field of medicine.

Methodology

A. Primary and Secondary Research

1. For my primary research, I have chosen to interview three different individuals within the pre-health field. The first participant is a fellow peer,

the second participant is a soon to be graduate student, and the third participant is a pre-health advisor at UC Davis.

2. For my secondary research, I have chosen to use articles and journals on Pediatrics and Health Literacy that I have found online. These journals and articles have been peer reviewed making them trusted resources for information on the discourse of pediatrics.

B. Interview Questions

There are several questions that I want to ask my interviewees, but there are four main questions that I plan to focus on that I believe will provide a concise understanding of the discourse of pediatricians.

1. What is your field of study and why are you interested in it?
2. How important do you believe reading, writing, and oral communication is within your field of study?
3. What kind of schooling/education is required to become a general practicing pediatrician? Are there certain classes you recommend taking outside of the core science classes to prepare you for your future career?
4. What are some common misunderstandings that you believe people have about the responsibilities of a pediatrician/doctor?

Results

A. Research Participants

In order to fully understand the literacy skills required within the pediatrics discourse, I chose to interview three individuals who have knowledge or have shown interest in the pre-health/pre-med field. The first individual I interviewed was Mahima Ali, she's a first year NBP major who has taken classes in psychology and plans to be pre-med. I chose her as a participant in my study because she has she has similar academic interests as myself. The

second individual that I chose to interview was Dilshad Samdin. Dilshad is my elder brother, who recently graduated from UC Berkeley as a Biochemistry major. He has held several jobs, shadowing doctors and working at research labs at Berkeley. He will be getting his Ph.D. at Irvine for Medicinal Chemistry and Pharmacology. The third individual I chose to interview was Joanna Snap, she's the director of the Pre-Health advising program here at UC Davis.

Interviewee 1: Mahima Ali

My field of study is Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior. This field is particularly interesting to me because I wish to do research in autism and neuropsychiatric disorders including anxiety and Alzheimer's. Reading, writing, and oral communication are imperative within my field of study. When examining a patient with Autism, one must entail excellent communication skills. This requires patience and control of tone when communicating with patients and their families. Writing in this field is also essential because any given information is an automatic constituent for a patient's record. Upon the admission and completion of medical school, a student must then complete 3 years of pediatric training in hospitals and other various health facilities. Some common misunderstandings people may have about the responsibilities of a doctor include assuming that their job primarily consists of writing prescriptions. After close diagnosis, the physician proceeds with a choice of treatment that may include writing a prescription but includes other treatment including referrals and professional advice.

Interviewee 2: Dilshad Samdin

I am a Bio-Chemistry major and I am interested in this field because I enjoy learning about chemistry and the biological origin of life. I believe that reading and writing is extremely important within this field of study. There's so much reading and writing that has to be done within this field that goes unnoticed. You have to be able to read medical journals,

prescriptions, nurse comments, patient comments, etc. You need to complete your undergraduate education, get a medical degree, do residency, internships, shadowing other pediatric doctors within your field of interest. I would recommend taking several English classes and philosophy classes to help you ensure you are able to read and write analytically to better prepare you for your discourse of interest.

Interviewee 3: Joanna Sharp

I am a Pre-Health advisor and while I was in school, I majored in English and studied higher education. I have an English and Education background because I really enjoy helping people and helping them achieve their goals. I used to work at the admissions office at a medical school, but found that this position is much more rewarding. I believe reading, writing, and oral communication within this field of study is very important. Individuals who are interested in becoming pediatricians will be required to take a 7-hour exam that is not all multiple choice. You need four years of pediatrics training and education, a medical degree, and a fellowship which is usually between 4-8 years. I recommend taking several classes that will enhance your literacy abilities such as; philosophy, writing classes, sociology, and Spanish.

Discussion

My research and findings have found that reading and writing is necessary for the discourse of pediatricians. In order for an individual to be apart of this discourse, they have to be able to read and write on a daily basis. It is impossible to avoid the necessity of these two aspects because pediatricians work hands on with other people.

Being able to communicate whether it is by words or by the mouth is important and can even “...increase diagnostic accuracy, improve patient understanding and adherence to treatment, and enhance the experience of health services and health outcomes” (Damm et al., 2). We already know that doctors are intelligent, but expressing and communicating their knowledge is a

much harder challenge. It's important that even after an individual completes all of their necessary schooling that they never stop reading because reading has been proven to stimulate the mind and help you become a critical thinker. Pediatricians belong to their own discourse of medical journals that they have access to and are required to read because it provides information regarding various health problems and treatments.

My interviewees contributed significantly to my research investigation about the reading and writing requirements within my discourse. They all expressed the importance of being able to read medical diagrams, charts, prescriptions, and medical journals. While also being able to write coherent letters to other doctors, pharmacies, insurance companies, and patients. One suggestion that I thought of on my own after doing my research was how students interested in this discourse should take a communications class at their university. I believe it is a great way to begin practicing effective verbal and written communication for any job in any field.

Sources

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