

The AIDET® Communication Framework

There are three common problems that stem from poor communication during care interactions:

1. Research from Huron shows that patients especially dislike feeling like just another number. Poor communication in care interactions can come across as indifference or a lack of empathy on the part of the provider, caregiver or staff, which negatively impacts the patient's perception of care.
2. The research also confirms that patients want greater transparency in their care interactions. When patients don't understand what a provider, nurse, technician or any staff member is doing for them and why, the lack of clarity can lead to a lack of motivation to stay healthy, derailing adherence to treatment plans.
3. Struggling to communicate with patients and their families during care interactions is a major source of burnout for physicians, nurses and staff that spans organization type or medical expertise. Solving these problems requires a flexible but consistent structure of communication that physicians, nurses and staff can easily use in any care interaction.

Patient Communication: Framing the Conversation

What Is AIDET?

AIDET® is a structure for communication that enables healthcare professionals to engage patients in a way that demonstrates empathy, improves clinical outcomes and reduces burnout caused by miscommunication. This foundational tactic for effective patient communication is used by nurses, physicians, technicians, administrators and all staff involved in patient and family encounters across the care continuum

How Does AIDET Work?

Designed to keep patients informed and make them feel heard, AIDET stands for the five key communication behaviors that create positive care interactions: acknowledge, introduce, duration, explanation and thank you.

Below is an example AIDET in practice:

A	Acknowledge	Greet the patient by name. Make eye contact, smile and acknowledge family or friends in the room.
I	Introduce	Introduce yourself and explain your role in providing their care.
D	Duration	Give the patient an accurate time frame for the duration of their visit, including information such as when they can expect to see the physician or receive lab results. When this is not possible, let the patient know what time you will check in to update them on progress.
E	Explanation	Explain each step of their visit, answer questions and let the patient know how to contact you, such as through a call button.
T	Thank You	Thank the patient. Express gratitude for choosing your facility and for their communication and cooperation. Thank family members and friends for being there to support the patient.

Utilizing AIDET does not have to be robotic, scripted or time-consuming. Healthcare professionals of all types can take this framework and make it their own. For physicians and staff who use it, AIDET has helped create better relationships with their patients and given them greater fulfillment with their work. For patients who experience it, AIDET improves their perception of care and promotes trust in their providers to do right by them.

Why Does AIDET Work?

It makes patients feel like individuals. The components of AIDET enable clinicians to recognize and validate a patient’s anxiety, fear or pain before addressing the patient’s condition with compassionate care.

It helps patients take better care of themselves. Understanding promotes treatment adherence. Adherence is essential for healing and the maintenance of health. AIDET provides the “why” behind the treatment plan and makes it more likely that the patients will check their blood sugar, avoid certain foods or exhibit other healthy behaviors in an effort to take care of themselves.

It gives clinicians and staff a greater sense of purpose. Burnout among healthcare providers is an epidemic, and the loss of connection with patients is both a cause and a symptom. AIDET allows the clinician to have a more human, authentic encounter with the patient, serving as a reminder of why they became a healthcare professional in the first place. The human relationship aspect of the encounter is embedded in the process and can bring more satisfaction to the practice of medicine. The rapid pace of change in the industry, the complexities of medicine and the growing importance of technical skill have overshadowed how essential empathy is in successfully treating patients. By using this flexible and consistent framework for communication, healthcare professionals can transform not only the patient experience but also their own working experience as a care provider.

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Key Takeaways

To deliver exceptional care experiences through better communication practices, healthcare professionals should:

Think differently.

Recognize that communication with patients and their families sets the tone for the patient's overall perception of care.

Plan differently.

Provide clinicians and staff with a standardized communication framework that helps them effectively convey empathy during patient interactions.

Act differently.

Help clinicians and staff make stronger connections to patients and their families in order to improve everyone's well-being.



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