

Best Practices for Working With Patients Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision



This tip sheet is designed to assist healthcare providers and office administrators to support patients with visual impairments. Although patients may not have started dialysis while being blind or having low vision, their vision can worsen as their kidney condition progresses. Following these tips can help eliminate communication barriers and improve the quality of care that patients receive.

Patient Interaction and Communication:

- Ask patients to describe their level of vision and if they need any assistance. Not all patients with vision impairments wear dark glasses or have a guide dog or a cane.
- Allocate extra time to appointments and recognize that patients can be dependent on others for travel.
- Ensure patients understand who is in the room and their roles.
- Keep a note on all patients' files with details of communication requests and preferences.
- Identify yourself clearly and face patients directly when speaking.
 - Do not assume patients will recognize you by your voice; use your full name and indicate your role in their care.
- Speak naturally and clearly and avoid using a third person to communicate.
- Explain what you are doing before you plan to leave the room.
- Continuously assess all patients' needs and offer appropriate assistance.

Information Sharing and Accessibility:

- Share information thoughtfully with families and caregivers and remember to maintain patient confidentiality in all interactions when reading information aloud.
- Ask patients how they prefer to receive information.
- Use clear and direct communication, avoiding creating assumptions about patients' abilities.
- Ask patients about their support network and involve it in healthcare decisions.

Facility Accessibility and Patient Assistance:

- Greet and verbally offer help to all patients entering the facility, regardless of disability. Pay attention to furniture placement, lighting, glare reduction, and signage to ensure accessibility.
- Take time to explain room layouts verbally using accurate and specific language.
 - Use accurate and specific language when giving directions or explaining the layout of a room. For example, "The door is on your left," rather than "The door is over there."
- Clarify plans for follow-up and ensure information is accessible and understood.
- Share relevant information with other healthcare providers and flag medical records accordingly.

Additional Resources and References:

- [Flowchart Guide to Using Interpretive Services](#)
- [Caring For Patients Who are Blind or Visually Impaired: A Fact Sheet for the Outpatient Care Team](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act Checklist: Health Care Facilities and Service Providers](#)