



CLA IMPROVES PRE-CLERKSHIP STUDENTS' PATIENT-CENTERED COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE

How Can We Better Prepare Medical Students for Real Patient Conversations?

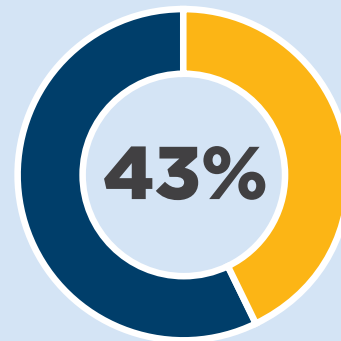
NBME set out to answer this question through a recent efficacy study of the Communication Learning Assessment (CLA). The goal? To explore how CLA impacts pre-clerkship students' ability to communicate effectively—and confidently—with patients.

What was the Approach?

We designed an experimental study to test CLA's feedback model, which includes exemplar-based feedback and guided self-reflection. A total of 194 medical students were randomly assigned to one of four conditions varying in the use of exemplars, self-evaluation checklists, and reflection prompts. Each student completed eight CLA video-based vignettes over two sessions ("Session 1" and "Session 2") held 1-2 weeks apart, in which the student responded to realistic patient scenarios. Depending on feedback condition, students reviewed high-quality exemplar responses, self-evaluated their performance, and engaged in structured reflection before revising their responses. Students also rated their perceived confidence in communicating with patients after completing each CLA Session.

What did we find?

Results indicated that students who were assigned to the Full CLA Feedback Condition showed significantly (43%) higher odds of demonstrating patient-centered communication behaviors during Session 2, as compared to Session 1, indicating improved skills over time! Students in the other conditions, which offered less or no feedback features, showed no significant improvements from from Session 1 to Session 2.



Students who used CLA with the full feedback model were significantly (**43%**) more likely to demonstrate patient-centered communication behaviors during a second session as compared to their first session, indicating improved skills over the 1-2-week interval between assessments. Each assessment included 4 CLA vignettes.

► [Get all the details at NBME.org](https://www.nbme.org)

After completing Session 2 of CLA, students responded to a post-assessment survey. Two items asked about their confidence:

- ▶ I feel more confident in providing clear and understandable information to patients after completing this activity
- ▶ I feel more confident in recognizing and addressing patient emotions after completing this activity.



9 out of 10 students felt more confident in communicating with patients after completing Session 1 and Session 2 of CLA

For the Full CLA Feedback Condition, 9 out of 10 students agreed that they felt more confident in communicating with patients after completing CLA. ⁱⁱ

Why Does this Matter?

Effective physician-patient communication skills are critical to building compassionate relationships and providing high quality patient care. Yet, medical students often do not feel prepared to communicate with patients in real hospital and clinic settings. The findings of this study suggest that use of CLA can support students' development of patient-centered communication skills.

The study is currently under review at a peer-reviewed medical education journal. A link to the full report will be shared upon publication.



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ⁱ Odds ratio = 1.43; 95% CI [1.11, 1.82]; p = .005

ⁱⁱ A 7-point Likert-type scale was employed: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat Disagree (3), Neither Agree nor Disagree (4), Somewhat Agree (5), Agree (6), Strongly Agree (7). Students whose average rating on the two items was 5 or higher were classified as agreeing with the statement. For the control group, only 7 out of 10 agreed with the statement.