Laypersons' views on doctors' use of Chinese medical terms, a qualitative study

Yingli Wu¹, Lap Ki Chan¹, Richard Fielding²
¹Institute of Medical and Health Sciences Education & Department of Anatomy,
²Division of Behavioural Health, School of Public Health

Introduction

- Doctors' use of medical terms is generally considered to be a potential problem for patients. However, some researchers argued that patients might in fact prefer medical terms to lay language.

Medical terms may lead to misunderstandings, decrease satisfaction

VS.

Medical terms can increase patient confidence in the doctor, result in a more satisfactory consultation

What are laypersons' views on doctors' use of Chinese medical terms?

Methods

Forty four Hong Kong laypersons were interviewed after the exposure to one of three video clips which differed in the use of words explaining a case of prolapsed intervertebral disc.

- video 1: lay terms
- video 2: medical terms
- video 3: lay + medical terms

randomly assigned to watch a video clip

semi-structured face-to-face interview

data-driven thematic analysis

Results

- Hong Kong laypersons' views on doctors' use of Chinese medical terms.

Theme 1

I would prefer lay terms.

It was not necessary to use so many technical terms when explaining to the patient.

Medical terms cannot be understood by ordinary citizens.

Theme 2

Medical terms is more specific, the patient will know more clearly about their own conditions.

It will be easier for patients to look for further information.

The patient will feel that the doctor is more professional.

Theme 3

Difficulty coping strategies

Preference of

written materials
visual aids
repetitions

There are some reasons for

the use of technical terms

Conclusion

- Although doctors' use of Chinese medical terms may create comprehension difficulties for patients, it can be beneficial to patients in certain circumstances.

- It is important for medical students in Hong Kong to prepare themselves with adequate Chinese medical vocabularies.

References