Tips for Using the EMR in Patient-Centered Care

*Despite certain limitations of electronic medical records (EMRs), they are clearly a part of family medicine's future. Below are some tips to **suggest to your students** for improving doctor-patient communication while using EMRs.*

1. Be prepared before you enter the exam room

- *Look at the last note in the EMR.* Write down items you may need to ask the patient.

- *Input basic information* into the EMR before you enter.

- *Be patient-centered.* Think about how to balance your agenda with the patient's agenda.

2. Focus on communicating with your patients

- *Look at your patients.* Seems obvious, but it is easy to stare at the computer. The EMR is just a tool used to enhance our care for patients. Patients should always feel like (and be) the priority.

- *Tell your patients what you are doing as you are doing it.* Talk to your patients as you search for and enter data into the EMR.

3. Integrate technology into the visit

- *Use mobile computer monitors* and rearrange the monitor's position to interact more easily with patients.

- *Incorporate typing around your patients' needs.* If a patient is discussing a sensitive topic, don't type until the discussion is over.

- *Point to the screen.* This should be rare, but if necessary, point to key data on the screen so patients can follow the discussion.

- *Encourage patients' participation in building their charts.* Ask patients for permission to type while you talk or offer to show them what you are doing.

> Effective health care is a partnership, in which both patients and physicians have a stake in trusting each other. A key part of that trust is effective communication.
>
> **- Jeffrey Segal**

References / Resources:

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