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.

References / Resources: