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EM Journal Club
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Clinical Question

P: In low to moderate acuity patients presenting to the ED

I: Does the use of humor

C: Compared to not using humor

O: Increase patient satisfaction?

Search Strategy

PubMed, Best Bets, ACP Journal Club, TRIP, Cochrane, JAMA

Search Outcome

Best Bets, ACP Journal club, TRIP, and Cochrane searches returned no relevant papers. PubMed (“humor and patient satisfaction” with limits to English, Clinical trials, RCTs, Reviews) 2 hits with 1 review and no RCTs

Author	Group	Study Type	Results	Weaknesses
Beck RS, Daughtridge R, Sloane PD J Am Board Fam Pract 2002	Studies of office interactions b/w PCPs and pts from 1975-2000	Review of observational studies	Empathy, reassurance and support, patient- centered, humor , etc positively associated with health outcomes	Observational Use of humor not primary variable
Levinson W, Roter DL, et al JAMA 1997	124 physicians (PCPs and Surgeons)	Observational (Audio tape analysis)	Difference in claim vs no-claim physician communication in PCPs, but not surgeons	Observational Not ER docs Humor not primary variable

Strategies for Effective Humor in the ED

1. Assess patient’s receptiveness to humor
2. Time your humor wisely
3. Stimulate information gathering
4. Avoid offensive topics
5. Apologize if necessary
6. Use generously in the pediatric population
7. Maintain perspective on your role
8. Be mindful of your behavior with staff
9. Do not force humor
10. Have fun!

Clinical Bottom Line

Humor can and should be used in the Emergency Department. It enhances the physician-patient relationship and fosters communication if used in the appropriate patient and circumstance.

“With these changes in latitudes
Changes in attitudes nothing remains quite the same
With all of our running & all of our cunning
If we couldn't laugh we would go insane
If we couldn't laugh we would all go insane
If we weren't all crazy, we would go insane.”
Jimmy Buffett, *Changes in Latitudes, Changes in Attitudes*

Suggested Reading

1. Penson RT, Partridge RA, Rudd P, Seiden MV, Nelson JE, Chabner BA, Lynch TJ Jr. Laughter: The Best Medicine? *Oncologist* 2005;10:651-660
2. Bennett HJ. Humor in Medicine. *Southern Medical Journal* 2003 Dec; 96(12):1257-61
3. Taylor C, Bengner JR. Patient satisfaction in emergency Medicine. *Emerg Med J* 2004;21:528-532
4. Beck RS, Daughtridge R, Sloane PD. Physician-Patient Communication in the Primary Care Office: A Systematic Review. *J Am Board Fam Pract* 2002; 15: 25-38
5. Robinson VM. *Humor and the Health Professions*. Thorofare, NJ, Slack, Inc., 1991
6. Fry WF Jr. The physiological effects of humor, mirth, and laughter. *JAMA* 1192; 267: 1857-1858
7. Levinson W, Roter DL, Mullooly JP, et al. Physician-patient communication: the relationship with malpractice claims among primary care physicians and surgeons. *JAMA* 1997; 277: 553-559