

Webisode manner:

an innovative evolution from traditional bedside manner due to the rise of digital health services



Dr Abdul Seckam, Beverley
Jerome & Rachael Ordell

Webside manner: an innovative evolution from traditional bedside manner due to the rise of digital health services

Abdul Seckam, Beverley Jerome & Rachael Ordell.

The concept of 'webside manner' is an interesting evolution from the traditional bedside manner that doctors have utilised for generations. This change has been primarily catalysed by the rise and exponential evolution of digital health services in recent years – a change that has ultimately been expedited due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The fundamental principle behind this concept is still the same – how a healthcare provider interacts with a patient during the treatment process. However, the transition to digital health services has posed a new set of challenges and opportunities. Before the advent of digital healthcare, a clinician's bedside manner was largely defined by their physical presence and interpersonal skills – their tone of voice, their body language, and their ability to physically comfort a patient, among other factors. However, as digital health services become more common, particularly in the wake of increased demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, clinicians have to adapt to a new set of circumstances where these traditional skills may not translate as effectively.

Webside manner thus involves a shift in focus towards maximising effective communication and relationship-building in a digital space. This is reflected in the regular reviewing and benchmarking of call recordings by the clinical team, following patient-reported experience measures (PREMs) and notes of outlier behaviour. The audit tool employed by them includes evaluation of this 'webside manner' along with factors including clinical reasoning, shared decision-making, modified physical examination and explanation of the patient's next steps.

The ultimate aim of these reviews and audits is to support the continual improvement of clinicians' webside manner and the development of new skills required for digital consultations. This proactive approach in adapting to the digital healthcare space is expected to maintain or even enhance clinician-patient relationships and overall experiences. However, it is also critical to consider societal factors including accessibility to digital platforms, connectivity and digital literacy – areas that must be tackled to make digital healthcare universally beneficial.

There have been suggestions on the significance of web-side manner in virtual healthcare delivery and its impact on patient experience. Doximity (2020) and Gray et al., (2020), outline steps before, during, and following telemedicine sessions to help clinicians communicate as effectively with their patients, thus establishing meaningful connections with patients during remote consultations. Some highlighted steps include:

- Planning to avoid technology issues
- Displaying empathy virtually.
- Providing a patient-centred technology experience.
- Be mindful of tele-etiquette.

These steps provide insights into the importance of web-side manner, and its impact on patient experiences, satisfaction and quality of care in virtual healthcare settings.

HBSUK webside manner and PREMs 2024

As we move into the digital era of healthcare, digital excellence is high on the agenda at HBSUK. Additionally, the collation and collection of Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs), Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs), Net Promoter Scores (NPS), and Clinical Reported Experience Measures (CREMs) coupled with training and evaluation concerning 'webside' manner add to the value we bring to digital healthcare. In detail, the PREMs set questions which complement the webside manner as highlighted above include:

- Did you feel your clinician fully understood your condition?
- Did you understand what is going to happen next?
- How would you rate your overall experience?
- How would you rate your clinician?

PREMs in line with our EPIC values and underpinned by the patient voice, propel and add to our digital excellence. For our first quarter in 2024, the following PREMs measures were collated amongst patients who use our MSK services.

Did you have the opportunity to describe your condition?	False	True
Advanced Physiotherapist	1%	99%
Consultant	0.81%	99.19%
Physiotherapist	0.61%	99.39%
Total	0.75%	99.25%

Do you feel your clinician fully understood your condition?	False	True
Advanced Physiotherapist	2.42%	97.58%
Consultant	2.89%	97.11%
Physiotherapist	2.61%	97.39%
Total	2.62%	97.38%

Do you understand what is going to happen next?	False	True
Advanced Physiotherapist	3.70%	96.30%
Consultant	4.02%	95.98%
Physiotherapist	3.77%	96.23%
Total	3.80%	96.20%

Overall, how would you rate your clinician?	Score
Advanced Physiotherapist	4.80
Consultant	4.81
Physiotherapist	4.81
Total	4.81

Table 1 – Patient satisfaction by role

Coupled with the above data, a 36% survey completion was recorded. An NPS of 62 was calculated and the average PREMs was 4.62. As highlighted in Table 1 together with the excellent NPS and PREMs, reflect the digital excellence and high standard of webside manner being delivered by HBSUK clinicians. In summary, while the digital revolution in healthcare has necessitated this evolution from bedside to webside manner, the same principles apply of empathy, understanding, and effective communication at their core, simply adapted to suit our increasingly digital world.

References

Doximity, (2020). *4 Tips to Improve Your Webside Manner: Best Practices for Virtual Patient Engagement: How to Better Connect With Your Patients Through the Screen*. Accessed on 14.05.24 from 4 Tips to Improve Your Webside Manner: Best Practices for Virtual Patient Engagement (doximity.com)

Gray, D.M., Joseph, J.J. & Olayiwola, J.N. (2020). Strategies for Digital Care of Vulnerable Patients in a COVID-19 World—Keeping in Touch. *JAMA Health Forum*. 2020;1(6):e200734. doi:10.1001/jamahealthforum.2020.0734.