

Evidence underpinning working with cues

Exploring patient cues and verbal cues in particular has been shown to enable GPs to more effectively detect clinical distress and identify concerns in their patients (Davenport et al, 1987).

Patients with high levels of anxiety rarely state concern or worry directly. Older adults in particular tend to offer subtle verbal cues needing pro-active exploration if the underlying concern is to be uncovered. Analysis of GP consultations has shown that patients are more able to express concerns when the GP demonstrates empathy, uses clarification questions and asks for the patients' ideas (Bensing et al, 2008; Sundler et al, 2017).

Evidence for empathic acknowledgement

Neurological studies, have investigated how emotions and subsequent key communication behaviours impact on the sympathetic nervous system (SNS). Patient-centred communication skills (empathy, working with cues, working with patient agenda and concerns) have been found to buffer cortisol stress responses during consultations, reduce distress, increase information recall and increase compliance (Harari et al; 2000, Lelorain et al, 2012; Gemmiti, et al, 2017).