

## Communications Skills Used by Mental Health Professionals

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**Introduction:** Good doctor-patient communication has been shown to have a positive impact on a number of health outcomes in previous studies.

**Objectives:** to assess the communications skills used by mental health professionals (MHP).

**Aims:** This study explores the impact of clinical factors related to MHP (communications skills) on treatment adherence of patients with mental health disorders (MHD).

**Methods:** In this cross-sectional study we use a convenience sample of patients with MHD attending in the mental health departments of three general hospitals in Lisbon. Data is being collected through individual interviews. We have applied a clinical and socio-demographic questionnaire and additional measures to assess symptom severity, treatment adherence and attitudes towards medication. For MHP we used an optimism scale (ETOS) and *Medication Alliance Beliefs Questionnaire* (MABQ).

**Results:** Two convenience samples were composed by 121 patients (mean age = 39.8; SD ± 9.3) with MHD and 60 MHP (mean age 37.0; SD 8.4) working in a variety of settings. 69.4% (84) of patients said that MHP did not speak about the way to deal with the possible side effects of medications and only 20% (12) of MHP, said that they have a specific training in communication skills.

**Conclusion:** Communication skills should be improved and physicians should take a more active role in improving patient treatment adherence. Do not just prescribe medication, it is necessary to adapt the treatment to the profile and characteristics of each patient, assessing risk factors and facilitate the clarification of doubts. Successful collaboration requires tailoring strategies to individual patients rather than basing communication on general assumptions.