



2014

## Book Review: The language of caring guide for physicians: communication essentials for patient-centered care (2nd edition)

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### Recommended Citation

Wyman, Chet MD (2014) "Book Review: The language of caring guide for physicians: communication essentials for patient-centered care (2nd edition)," *Patient Experience Journal*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://pxjournal.org/journal/vol1/iss2/19>

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## Book Review: *The language of caring guide for physicians: communication essentials for patient-centered care (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*

Written by Wendy Leebov, Ed.D. and Carla Rotering, MD

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Kudos for Leebov and Rotering's *The Language of Caring Guide for Physicians: Communication Essentials for Patient-Centered Care (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. Well-respected experts and authors in the field of healthcare communication and education, Leebov and Rotering have given us a concise, well-written field guide for improving our communication skills and demonstrating our passion and caring for patients.

Whether one is interested in personal self-introspection and self-improvement or organizational culture change, *The Language of Caring Guide for Physicians* is the essential playbook to follow for transformation. The book is divided into modular chapters that can be used by themselves or together as a complete program with the modules following the same structural format. Each module begins with an assessment of current practice followed by instructional material on state of the art communication skills as well as "real-life" examples of provider-patient interactions related to seven physician competencies: Mindful Practice, Collaboration and Teamwork, Effective Openings and Closings, Communicating with Empathy, Engaging Patients and Families as Partners, Effective Explanations, and Hard Conversations. Every chapter reinforces its main points through "Rules of Thumb" bullet points that give providers practical skills to follow that transform behaviors into habits.

All modules have useful assessment tools that can be used for self/departmental assessment as well as obtaining feedback from colleagues, peers and patients. In addition to providing useful feedback, these tools send a very important message to customers (both internal/external) that "I care how you perceive my treatment of you." The authors do an excellent job of framing the current environment where perception is 9/10 of reality and excellent communication quality is not only important from a regulatory perspective, but it also improves patient engagement, adherence to care plans and family interactions.

The book includes very useful tools to assess the current status of communication skills (described as key competencies) so that one can focus on whichever areas

need the most attention or set priorities in approaching departmental/organizational transformation. The book suggests a game plan to follow that will engage providers and allow them to get ongoing feedback at the same time.

I was very impressed with the insight on how disruptive information technology has become to the patient-physician interaction. The book provides some powerful messaging that can be used to not only show the patient that you are engaging them but helps to explain how important it is to communicate with each other effectively. I personally have started using some of these messages in my daily practice to reassure patients that I am listening and trying to get all of their important information into the record for others to use.

Having participated in many organizational re-design opportunities, I find *The Language of Caring Guide for Physicians* to be insightful as to how physicians think and operate in their daily routines and how we can be more effective.

I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to improve their own communication skills and also for physician leaders responsible for initiatives to engage physicians and improve service quality, patient outcomes, and CAHPS scores for a department or organization. I think it is an essential read in today's healthcare environment.