Faculty of Medicine in Rijeka

Curriculum
2026/2027

For course

Communication and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships

Study program:	**Medical Studies in English (R)** (elective) University integrated undergraduate and graduate study
Department:	**Department of Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine**
Course coordinator:	**naslovna prof. dr. sc. Šendula-Jengić Vesna, dr.med.**
Year of study:	**1**
ECTS:	**1.5**
Incentive ECTS:	**0 (0.00%)**
Foreign language:	**Possibility of teaching in a foreign language**

Course information:

During this course the students shall be familiarized with the basic terms from theory of communication and communication skills. They will gain insight in connecting data from various fields of research, medicine psychology, general psychiatry, pre-clinical sciences and neuroscience, and that relate to the understanding of the origin and development of personality through interactive relationships with other people. This course shall enable student to acquire more easily communication skills, fundamentals of team work, inter-student cooperation and communication on various levels.

Further on, the student shall be introduced to the fundamentals of analytical theories which are significant in the field of communication, such as the attachment theory and attachment schemes, i.e. implicit memories based on early experiences of safety and danger, more pronounced in stressful situations because of the central role of attachment in the regulation of affect. Disorganized attachment holds a central place in many forms of psychopathology. Preservation of self-respect is the best protection against narcissistic vulnerability. The concepts of the real and false self shall also be discussed.

Students shall be prepared for the clinical contact with patient, they will gain skills and knowledge about the listening of patient's (and other people's) narration, about the left hemisphere – the interpreter and the right hemisphere which communicates via facial expression, body language, emotion. Narration requires semantic processing of the left hemisphere to be integrated with the emotional networks of the right hemisphere. The interrelationship between verbal (narrative) and non verbal (emotional) communication shall also be discussed as well as the distortions introduced by defences.

Based on the given data the students shall gain insight into the meaning of specific types of communication and in making hypotheses about how they can affect the other person. The level of understanding in communication shall be increased.

The students shall be introduced to different elements and types of communication essential for a health care provider, such as dysfunctional communication, self-disclosure, communication in crisis, reflection and interpretation, family dynamics and communication with significant others etc.

During the course the students shall learn about the theories about the human psychological development, development of neuroscience and the places of direct implementation of scientific methods and procedures in everyday communication, work with the patients and team/group communication.

This course shall briefly discuss ethics in communication which will be dealt with in more depth in the course Medical ethics.

Evaluation of the achieved level and quality of interpersonal relations in group shall be done at the beginning and the end of the work.

List of assigned reading:

1. Wood, J. T. (2009) *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*. Boston: Wadsworth Publishing Company
2. Trenholm, S. & Jensen, A. (2007) *Interpersonal Communication*. New York : Oxford University Press
3. Coates, G.T. (2009) *Notes on Communication: A few thoughts about the way we interact with the people we meet.* Free e-book from www.wanterfall.com
4. Reardon, K. (1988) *Interpersonalna komunikacija – gdje se misli susreću*. Zagreb : Alinea
5. Knapp, M.L., Hall, J.A. (2010) *Neverbalna komunikacija u ljudskoj interakciji*. Jastrebarsko : Naklada Slap

List of optional reading:

1. Šegota I. i sur. (2010) *Gluhi i znakovno medicinsko nazivlje. Kako komunicirati s gluhim pacijentom*. Zagreb : Medicinska naklada
2. Klain E., Gregurek R. i sur. (2007) *Grupna psihoterapija za medicinske sestre i tehničare*. Zagreb : Medicinska naklada
3. Bodiroga-Vukobrat, N., Frančišković, T., Pernar, M. (ur.) (2006) *Mobbing*. Rijeka : Društvo psihologa PGŽ
4. Šendula-Jengić, Vesna (ur.) *Unaprjeđenje kvalitete rada u domovima za stare i nemoćne - praktikum za djelatnike* . Rab: Psihijatrijska bolnica Rab, 2009.
5. Bošković, G., Šendula-Jengić, V. Mental Health as Eudaimonic Well-Being? (Editorial) Psychiatria Danubina, 20 (2008) 4: 452-455.

Curriculum:

Seminars list (with titles and explanation):

S1. Meaning in communication

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the concept of meaning in communication, its importance in building interpersonal relationships, and especially in the context of communication in healthcare, especially in the doctor-patient relationship.

S2. Communication competences

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the role of perception in the context of interpersonal communication at the level of emotions, motivation and cognition, processes of interpersonal perception including assessment of the situation, person, interpersonal relationships and interpretation of behavior.

S3. Cognitive processes, emotions and communication

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the role and importance of different cognitive processes for the development of communication skills, the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, the concept of emotional competence, differences in personal, social and professional communication competence, different ways of processing emotional information (empathy, sympathy, etc.).

S4. Verbal and non-verbal communication

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the processes in which the doctor consciously, through verbal and non-verbal communication, tries to therapeutically influence the patient, communication approaches that can have a negative effect on the therapeutic process, examples of desirable and undesirable therapeutic communication.

S5. Persuasion

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the concept of persuasion and the role of persuasion in achieving desirable therapeutic communication/outcomes.

S6. Dysfunctional communication and conflict

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about possible causes of dysfunctional communication, the concept of conflict, types and most common causes of conflict, positive and negative aspects of conflict, typical forms of conflict behavior and conflict resolution styles with regard to the level of care for oneself and others.

S7. Breaking bad news

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about existing approaches to communicating bad news, especially in doctor-patient and doctor-family relationships.

S8. Health (therapeutic) communication with special reference to individual diagnostic entities and age groups

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the elements of health (therapeutic) communication with regard to different diagnostic entities and age groups of patients.

S9. Effective communication

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the basic characteristics of effective communication as key skills within the healthcare team and within the healthcare team - patient - family communication.

S10. Communication in crisis situations with patients and in the work environment

Through student presentations and discussion, to upgrade knowledge about the characteristics of a crisis situation and applying adequate modalities and methods of communication with regard to specific circumstances and the role of the doctor in the communication process, the features and methods of informing, taking into account what information individuals or groups should receive, and how to convey it , which vocabulary, etc.

Lectures list (with titles and explanation):

P1. History of communication and models of communication processes

Describe the concepts of communication and communication skills, explain the importance of developing specific communication skills and their role in moderating and the outcome of interpersonal communication throughout history, analyze models of communication processes.

P2. Theories of communication

Explain the elements of communication theories, the importance of communication skills in health care, give examples of good or bad communication in the relationship between doctor and patient / user of the service / family member / member of the healthcare team.

P3. Meaning in communication

Define the concept of meaning in communication, explain its importance in building interpersonal relationships, especially in the context of communication in healthcare with special focus on the doctor-patient relationship.

P4. Communication competences

Explain the role of perception in the context of interpersonal communication at the level of emotions, motivation and cognition, state the processes of interpersonal perception including assessment of the situation, person, interpersonal relationships and interpretation of behavior.

P5. Personality, development, attachment theory, self

Describe the concepts of personality, development and "self" in the context of the development of an individual's communication skills, analyze the elements of the developmental theory of attachment and their significance for understanding the development of children and adults, explain the specifics of communication with children and adolescents with an emphasis on communication between doctor and patient.

P6. Cognitive processes, emotions and communication

State and explain the role and significance of different cognitive processes for the development of communication skills, explain the importance of interpersonal and intrapersonal communication, explain the concept of emotional competence, explain and demonstrate the differences of personal, social and professional communication competence, explain different ways of processing emotional information (empathy, sympathy, etc.).

P7. Verbal and non-verbal communication

Explain the processes in which the doctor consciously, through verbal and non-verbal communication, tries to influence the patient therapeutically, describe communication approaches that can have a negative effect on the therapeutic process, give examples of desirable and undesirable therapeutic communication.

P8. Persuasion

Define the term persuasion, analyze the role of persuasion in achieving desired therapeutic communication/outcomes.

P9. Dysfunctional communication and conflict

State the possible causes of dysfunctional communication, explain the concept of conflict, state and describe the types and most common causes of conflict, state positive and negative aspects of conflict and explain why they are positive or negative, state and describe typical forms of conflict behavior and conflict resolution styles regarding the level of care for oneself and for others.

P10. Reflection and interpretation

Define the terms reflection and interpretation of persuasion as well as their main features, analyze their role in achieving desired therapeutic communication.

P11. Breaking bad news

Describe and analyze existing approaches to communicating bad news, especially in doctor-patient and doctor-family relationships.

P12. Health (therapeutic) communication with special reference to individual diagnostic entities and age groups

Analyze the elements of health (therapeutic) communication with regard to different diagnostic entities and age groups

of patients.

P13. Effective communication

List and describe the basic characteristics of effective communication as key skills within the healthcare team and within the healthcare team - patient - family communication.

P14. Introduction to crisis communication

Recognize the theoretical and practical context of crisis communication, identify the concepts of crisis communication and related concepts (crisis, emergency situation, disaster, crisis management, strategic communication), recognize the specifics of crisis management and crisis communication in healthcare.

P15. Communication in crisis situations with patients and in the work environment

Recognize the characteristics of a crisis situation and apply adequate modalities and methods of communication with regard to specific circumstances and the role of the doctor in the communication process, list and describe the features and methods of informating, taking into account what information individuals or groups should receive, and how to convey it , which vocabulary, etc.

Student obligations:

Attendance of lectures and seminars (minimum 80%).

Exam (exam taking, description of the written/oral/practical part of the exam, point distribution, grading criteria):

Evaluation will be performed according to the Legal Act of Evaluation of University of Rijeka and of School of Medicine. Students' performance will be evaluated through entire duration of the course (50% of the evaluation) as well as on the final exam (50% of the evaluation).

Evaluation of student's work						
Course attendance	5%	Activity/Participation	10%	Seminar paper	35%	Experimental w
Written exam	50%	Oral exam		Essay		Research
Project		Sustained knowledge check		Report		Practice
Portfolio						

Other notes (related to the course) important for students:

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COURSE HOURS 2026/2027

Communication and Quality of Interpersonal Relationships

Lectures (Place and time or group)	**Seminars** (Place and time or group)
30.10.2026	

P1. History of communication and models of communication processes:
• ONLINE (13:00 - 14:30) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P2. Theories of communication:
• ONLINE (13:00 - 14:30) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR	

naslovna prof. dr. sc. Šendula-Jengić Vesna, dr.med. [1667]	
05.11.2026	

P3. Meaning in communication:
• ONLINE (13:15 - 16:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P4. Communication competences:
• ONLINE (13:15 - 16:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P5. Personality, development, attachment theory, self:
• ONLINE (13:15 - 16:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR	

naslovna prof. dr. sc. Šendula-Jengić Vesna, dr.med. [1667]	
11.11.2026	

P6. Cognitive processes, emotions and communication:
• ONLINE (14:15 - 17:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P7. Verbal and non-verbal communication:
• ONLINE (14:15 - 17:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P8. Persuasion:
• ONLINE (14:15 - 17:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR	

naslovna prof. dr. sc. Šendula-Jengić Vesna, dr.med. [1667]	
19.11.2026	

P9. Dysfunctional communication and conflict:
• ONLINE (20:00 - 21:30) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P10. Reflection and interpretation:
• ONLINE (20:00 - 21:30) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR	

naslovna prof. dr. sc. Šendula-Jengić Vesna, dr.med. [1667]	
27.11.2026	

P11. Breaking bad news:
• ONLINE (10:15 - 13:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P12. Health (therapeutic) communication with special reference to individual diagnostic entities and age groups:
• ONLINE (10:15 - 13:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR
 	
P13. Effective communication:
• ONLINE (10:15 - 13:00) [1667]
  ◦ CAQOIR	

naslovna prof. dr. sc. Šendula-Jengić Vesna, dr.med. [1667]	

List of lectures, seminars and practicals:

LECTURES (TOPIC)	Number of hours	Location
P1. History of communication and models of communication processes	1	ONLINE
P2. Theories of communication	1	ONLINE
P3. Meaning in communication	1	ONLINE
P4. Communication competences	1	ONLINE
P5. Personality, development, attachment theory, self	1	ONLINE
P6. Cognitive processes, emotions and communication	1	ONLINE
P7. Verbal and non-verbal communication	1	ONLINE
P8. Persuasion	1	ONLINE
P9. Dysfunctional communication and conflict	1	ONLINE
P10. Reflection and interpretation	1	ONLINE
P11. Breaking bad news	1	ONLINE
P12. Health (therapeutic) communication with special reference to individual diagnostic entities and age groups	1	ONLINE
P13. Effective communication	1	ONLINE
P14. Introduction to crisis communication	1	
P15. Communication in crisis situations with patients and in the work environment	1	

SEMINARS (TOPIC)	Number of hours	Location
S1. Meaning in communication	1	
S2. Communication competences	1	
S3. Cognitive processes, emotions and communication	1	
S4. Verbal and non-verbal communication	1	
S5. Persuasion	1	
S6. Dysfunctional communication and conflict	1	
S7. Breaking bad news	1	
S8. Health (therapeutic) communication with special reference to individual diagnostic entities and age groups	1	

S9. Effective communication	1	
S10. Communication in crisis situations with patients and in the work environment	1	

EXAM DATES (final exam):
