Supplemental Digital Content, Table

Skills for communicating with Deaf persons

* Ensure there is adequate lighting in the room without low amounts of visual distractions
  + Deaf patients rely largely on their eyes for communication. If the patient cannot see you clearly, they are going to have trouble understanding you
* Begin the conversation by getting the patient’s attention.
  + Tap his or her shoulder
  + Wave your hand
  + Use other visual signals (e.g. turning the light on/off)
* Introduce yourself and your title when first meet the patient
* ALWAYS explain what you are doing and the purpose
* Don’t stand in front of a light source (e.g. window)
  + If you stand in front of a light source you are going to create a silhouette decreasing the light that is shining on your face and lips causing visual problems for the Deaf patient
* Ask the patient their preferred mode of communication with hearing persons
  + Writing
  + Reading lips (Only 30% of information is interpreted)
  + Interpreter
* Face the patient
  + Always face the patient when speaking, do not look in another direction or turn your back to the patient. How is the patient going to attempt to read your lips if you are not facing them?
  + Even if you have an interpreter in the room, you should ALWAYS face the patient when talking
* Speak clearly and normally
  + Do not exaggerate your lip movement when speaking to a Deaf patient
* Keep communication simple
  + Deaf people have a 3rd-4th grade reading level
    - Don’t use medical jargon
* Allow the patient time to answer
  + DO NOT show frustration if the patient is slow to answer or does not understand what you are trying to ask
* Be mindful of your facial expression and body language
  + Members of the Deaf community are good body readers
* Only one person should speak at a time in group situations
* Leave the room when engaged in conversation with another person
* Disability Act of 1990: The nation’s first comprehensive civil rights law addressing the needs of people with disabilities, prohibiting discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodations, and telecommunications
  + This means if a Deaf patient makes an appointment with his/her physician, they have the right to request an interpreter be present for their appointment. By Law the physician must ensure there is an interpreter at the patient’s appointment.
* When an interpreter is present
  + Ensure the interpreter is standing next to you while speaking
  + Make sure you are looking at the Deaf patient and not the interpreter while speaking
  + Remember the interpreter is going to tell the Deaf patient EVERYTHING that you say!
* DO NOT reduce your standards of care because you are out of your comfort zone