

9. Communicate genetic information to individuals, families and other healthcare staff

About this workforce competence

This competence is about communicating genetic information to individuals and families with or at risk of a genetic condition and communicating appropriate genetic information to other healthcare staff in the patient pathway.

There exists a variety of beliefs and understanding around genetic concepts. Some languages may not have specific words for genetic terms. It is important that your communication skills take account of background, language and level of understanding.

This is a competence which may be generally applicable to healthcare staff in a wide variety of roles.

Performance criteria

You need to:

- 1) ensure sufficient time is available for the consultation
- 2) identify the specific needs of the individual including preferred language, method of communication and any translation services needed
- 3) ensure relevant **resources** are available if required
- 4) assess the individual's current level of understanding of the genetic condition and their expectations regarding the implications for themselves and the family
- 5) communicate **information** about a **genetic** condition in an understandable non-directive manner, being aware of the impact genetic information may have on an individual / family
- 6) appreciate the importance of sensitivity in tailoring genetic information and services to the individual's culture, knowledge and language levels
- 7) ensure any genetic information you give to the individual is within the limits of your role, responsibility, knowledge and experience
- 8) encourage the individual to ask questions throughout the consultation
- 9) provide sources of information and support to individuals and others following the identification of genetic conditions
- 10) discuss any ethical, legal and social implications of a genetic diagnosis
- 11) respect the confidentiality of individuals and their families
- 12) communicate appropriate genetic information to other healthcare staff in the patient pathway as required

Knowledge and understanding

You need to apply:

Genetics

- K1. a working knowledge of genetic conditions, symptoms and clinical signs and modes of inheritance
- K2. a working knowledge of the psychological and social implications of genetic information for individuals and families
- K3. a working knowledge of specialist genetics services
- K4. a working knowledge of where to obtain information and support for individuals affected by, or at risk of, a genetic condition
- K5. a working knowledge of cultural, ethical and legal implications of genetic information

Communication Skills

- K6. a working knowledge of how to assess an individual's level of understanding, prior knowledge and misconceptions
- K7. a critical understanding of how to present information in ways appropriate for different individuals
- K8. an in-depth understanding of effective communicative skills and strategies consistent with levels of understanding, background, culture and preferred ways of communicating, including working with interpreters
- K9. an in-depth understanding of how to discuss sensitive issues with individuals
- K10.a working knowledge of how to access support services, for example interpreters, before consultation
- K11.an in-depth understanding that genetic information impacts not only on the individual but also on their immediate and extended family
- K12.an in-depth understanding that genetic consultations should be non-directive in supporting the individual to make informed choices
- K13.a working knowledge of how to ask questions, listen carefully and summarise back

Organisational

- K14.a working knowledge of consent and confidentiality guidelines

Links

This competence links with the following dimensions and levels within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework Working (October 2004).

Dimension: HWB 2 Assessment and care planning to meet health and wellbeing needs

Level: 4

Dimension: Core 1 Communication

Level: 4

Searchable Keywords

Communication, genetics, information, Downs syndrome, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell

Origin

This workforce competence was developed by Skills for Health October with the NHS National Genetics Education and Development Centre October 2006.

Scope

This section provides guidance on possible areas to be covered in this workforce competence.

Genetic Information	<p>Involving, resulting from, or relating to genetic material (genes and/or chromosomes)and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) causes of genetic conditions b) modes of inheritance c) implications for other family members d) future reproductive implications and options e) genetic testing
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Resources	May include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) communication aidsb) individual supportc) test resultsd) translator/interpreter
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