



Patient Education

Brief

Description

The World Health Organization defines patient education as “any combination of learning experiences designed to help individuals improve their health, by increasing their knowledge or influencing their attitudes.”¹ This combination of learning experiences consists primarily of providing verbal and written material to the patient to improve their motivation to maintain oral health and prevent complications from dental treatment received. Patient education offers an understanding of good oral health, the disease process and instruction about behaviors and hygiene activities to assist the patient. Providing patient education can result in improved long term oral health which can lead to better outcomes with the use of preventive dentistry and dental services. Patients who have a strong understanding of their disease process are much more likely to control their disease and not have repeated setbacks.²

Motivational interviewing (MI), a technique developed by clinical psychologists Drs. William R. Miller and Steven Rollnick, is defined as a “directive, client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence.” Thus it is more focused and goal-directed than simply imparting health information.³