



## International Hospitals and Healthcare

# How can doctors better communicate with patients?

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A recent study has shed light on how doctors can better communicate the value of clinical investigations to patients. The research, jointly conducted by Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) and clinicians at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), also in Singapore, studied social interaction in a hospital setting using a method called conversion analysis, in which videos of interactions in an authentic setting are transcribed verbatim and analysed.



Professor Luke Kang Kwong Kapathy, Assistant Professor Lim Ni Eng, Adjunct Assistant Professor Png Keng Siang. Credit: NTU Singapore

The study involved an analysis of 150 doctor-patient conversations at TTSH's Urology clinics led by Professor Luke Kang Kwong Kapathy and Assistant Professor Lim Ni Eng, both from NTU School of Humanities, in collaboration

with Adjunct Assistant Professor Png Keng Siang, Senior Consultant, Department of Urology, TTSH. “Conversation Analysis is a fresh look into communication in healthcare which doctors were not previously exposed to. We are excited that our day-to-day doctor-patient interactions can shed so much insight through the use of this novel approach,” said Adjunct Asst Prof Png Keng Siang.

Professor Kapathy said: “Current medical education already includes communication training, but we want to go a step further in looking at the actual interactions in the clinics. Studying the languages, responses and social psychology in the clinical setting gives us insights on what makes patients more receptive to doctors' recommendations, which may lead to patients being more willing to go through necessary tests and increased patient satisfaction.”

The team found that recurring scenarios included patients' expression of fear towards cystoscopy (endoscopy of the urinary bladder via the urethra), and apprehension towards going through multiple tests. The researchers said that to enhance the communication process, doctors can be more aware of patients' subconscious signs of fear, and to patients who may view the tests as being optional, they can also explain upfront that all the tests are needed to pinpoint the exact cause behind the symptoms, before going into test details.