

Book review

English for Medical Communication: A Guide to Course Design

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Successful communication in healthcare communication has been important to ensure patient safety, clinical decision-making, and research dissemination, yet previous studies just delve into general language proficiency or clinical communication without focusing on particular teaching strategies for various medical settings (Hull, 2016; Ortega et al., 2022; Alrasheeday et al., 2025). Although existing literature has laid the foundation for medical English instruction, it overlooks the incorporation of practical course designs or fails to discuss interdisciplinary topics, including ethical issues in research and public health communication. *English for Medical Communication: A Guide to Course Design* by Clarence Wenfeng Wang is a timely contribution to fill this gap by providing an in-depth exploration for English for Academic/Specific Purposes (EAP/ESP) teachers. The book offers skill-based strategies for crucial areas, including patient history reporting, medical report writing, and presenting ethical case discussions. By blending theoretical perspectives and actual course resources and updated research, teachers are well-equipped with fundamental knowledge to design specialized courses that improve students' medical communication skills in both clinical and classroom contexts.

The book is structured with twelve chapters, each addressing an essential aspect of medical communication and course design. It firstly introduces the rationale behind the book and the foundational principles of course design, followed by chapters that focus on improving important communication skills, such as patient history reporting, clinical handovers, ethical decision-making, and reflective writing. Subsequent chapters examine diverse aspects of medical writing, including report writing, research documentation, and systematic reviews, as well as writing for public audiences through popular science articles and platforms (e.g., Wikipedia). The book concludes by providing valuable insights and practical strategies for successful course design and medical communication. Each chapter incorporates fundamental knowledge to actual teaching pedagogies, making this book a comprehensive material for educators in the healthcare communication.

Chapter 1 presents a clear rationale and overview of the HKU teaching setting, laying a fundamental knowledge for the detailed skill-based chapters that follow. Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6 delve into essential communication techniques and ethical decision-making skills vital for

patient safety and professional judgment. Chapter 3 guides students in teaching patient history reporting, using patient-centered language, case analysis, and doctor-patient interviews. It also offers insights into teacher development in ESP contexts. Chapter 4 emphasizes clinical handover, teaching the Introduction, Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation (ISBAR) framework through scenario practice and role-playing to ensure effective communication and patient safety. Chapter 5 addresses medical ethics, guiding students to analyze and present cases using the Assertion-Evidence Approach, while fostering critical thinking through co-assessment between content and language teachers. Chapter 6 highlights reflective writing in healthcare, enhancing critical thinking, self-awareness, and empathy through group discussions and role-plays, thereby improving patient care and professional development.

Chapters 7, 10, and 11 focus on developing skills for writing structured, evidence-based documents essential in clinical practice and research. Chapter 7 covers medical report writing, including referral letters and medico-legal documents, using authentic materials and expert feedback to help students communicate complex medical information clearly. Chapter 10 teaches research report writing for Year 5 Dentistry students, supporting their Community Health Projects through text analysis and real-life research activities. Chapter 11 provides guidance on writing systematic reviews, emphasizing the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement for transparency and completeness, with step-by-step instructions and an annotated example for effective evidence-based research.

Chapters 2, 8, and 9 focus on enhancing public health literacy by improving students' ability to communicate complex medical information to diverse audiences. Chapter 2 combines linguistic analysis and strategy training to teach medical terminology, incorporating student-designed games for an engaging learning experience. Chapter 8 teaches popular science writing to help students communicate medical research clearly for a general audience, while Chapter 9 enhances students' ability to write for the public by contributing to Wikipedia, improving their skills in research, communication, and information verification. Chapter 12 concludes with practical guidance for designing medical communication courses, addressing challenges and encouraging continuous learning and collaboration among EAP/ESP professionals.

The first strength of this book lies in its valuable approach to teaching medical communication skills. The book includes various topics crucial for medical students, such as patient history reporting, clinical handover, and medical report writing. For instance, in Chapter 7, students learn how to write referral letters, school reports, and medico-legal reports using authentic learning resources, helping them to perceive the nuances of professional medical communication in practical medical contexts. This important knowledge makes the book a comprehensive material for teachers looking for designing courses that discuss the particular language needs of students at different stages of their training of medical communication.

Another strength is its strong emphasis on combining both content and language instruction. Chapters about medical ethics case presentations (Chapter 5) and research report writing (Chapter 10) demonstrate the effective co-assessment model, where the feedback to

students is from both content experts and language teachers. In Chapter 5, detailed knowledge about medical ethics with case studies and examples in analyzing ethical dilemmas is provided. The chapter also addresses the guidance from language teachers to students in reporting these cases clearly and professionally. This collaborative approach helps students obtain well-rounded instruction that enhances their ethical decision-making abilities and language proficiency simultaneously.

The book's coverage of various teaching techniques, including role-playing, peer reviews, and authentic materials, further strengthens its utility. For instance, in Chapter 4, students practice clinical handover using the ISBAR framework through role-play activities that simulate real-life healthcare scenarios. This hands-on approach allows students to engage actively with the content and apply their communication skills in a realistic context. The use of authentic materials, including doctor-patient interviews in Chapter 3 on patient history reporting, provides students with concrete instances of how medical professionals communicate in practice. This practical emphasis makes the book a valuable tool for fostering both critical thinking and actual communication skills.

While the book makes a significant contribution to the field, one minor limitation of the book is its focus on the assumption that readers have a basic understanding of medical communication principles and teaching methodologies. For instance, in Chapter 11, which covers writing systematic reviews, the book presumes that teachers are familiar with research methodologies and the PRISMA checklist, which may lead to some difficulties for those without prior background in these topics. Besides, although the book provides real-world guidance and instances, teachers who lack a medical knowledge may face difficulties navigating some of the technical aspects without further clarification or introductory materials. A more in-depth investigation to medical communication principles and resources tailored to teachers new to the field would help bridge this gap and make the book accessible to a wider audience.

Taken together, this book can serve as a real-world teaching resource for designing EAP/ESP courses for medical students. Its valuable inclusion of crucial communication skills, actual teaching strategies, and strong focus on ethical decision-making offer a complete approach to medical communication education. The book's comprehensive guidance on course design, effective classroom activities, and practical uses make it an indispensable tool for language teachers aiming to improve students' communication competence in clinical, research, and public health settings. With theoretical perspectives and actual resources, educators are well-equipped to prepare medical students for the communication difficulties they will encounter in their professional careers.

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Huu Chanh Nguyen works at University of Health Sciences, Viet Nam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam. He earned his PhD in English Language Studies from Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. His research interests include genre analysis (Health Sciences), corpus linguistics, translation, technology-enhanced language teaching and learning, CALL, Pragmatics, EAP/ESP/EDP, second language writing, English

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