

The Case for Emotional Intelligence in Health Care

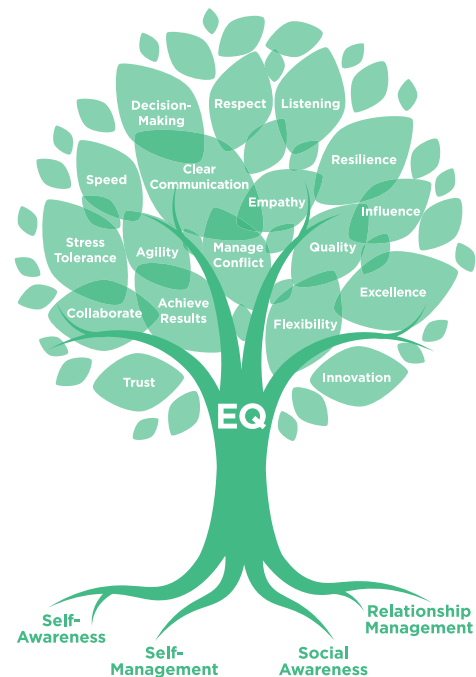
“What is remarkable is not merely the consequences of a doctor’s negative emotions. Despite research showing that most patients pick up on the physician’s negativity, few of them understand its effect on their medical care.”
-Jerome E. Groopman, M.D. Chair of Medicine at Harvard Medical School

What makes one health care professional shine over another, what predicts performance, and what drives patient satisfaction is the combination of what the care provider knows (stemming in part from their IQ and education), who that provider is (his or her personality style), and how that provider handles himself or herself, patients and colleagues on the job (emotional intelligence). Emotional intelligence (EQ) is this third major contributor to health care provider success. EQ is personal and social competence skills: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills.

EQ IS THE FOUNDATION FOR CRITICAL SKILLS.

As nurses, doctors and staff interact with their patients and with each other every day, emotions surface whether they notice them or not. EQ research supported over the last 20 years verifies how contagious the emotions of professionals in positions of power can be for the people around them. The four core EQ skills enable health care professionals to spot and manage these emotions for the benefit of clinical care, patient care outcomes, patient satisfaction, teamwork, and employee health, morale, and retention.

Simply put, emotional intelligence boosts patient care and career satisfaction. During a long shift that is short staffed, hospital and clinic employees need to be aware



of their emotions and behavior patterns when stretched (Self-Awareness) so they can respond productively and professionally (Self-Management) to the needs of patients and their families. When clinical care team members tune in to the emotions of their patients and their advocates (Social Awareness) they are better able to manage important needs such as pain tolerance. The socially aware clinician notices and interprets unspoken body language and emotional cues to check in on the need for more clarity when discussing medications or returning home. Relationship management skills enable care providers to build trust and to follow through with actions, both large and small, that patients perceive as being treated with courtesy and respect. Health care professionals who continually hone their EQ skills increase

their ability to communicate effectively, make good decisions, handle conflict, work effectively with teammates, manage stress, respond to change, and prevent their own career burnout.

Emotional intelligence isn't the only or most important driver of patient satisfaction, but EQ skills provide the foundation for the competencies that are. For example, the ability to identify and understand what another person is feeling helps a clinician ask that next important question, whether it's about pain level, or the need for a quieter room for much needed sleep. Similarly, unit staff who are aware of their own emotional and physical reactions to pressure will find it easier to manage their time advantageously or ask for support from team mates when energy or stress levels surface in unproductive ways.

EQ can be developed.

Perhaps the most important finding in emotional intelligence research is that it is a highly flexible skill. With practice, people who measure low in EQ can work to improve a specific EQ skill within six months to a year. During the last two decades, research shows that people who develop their emotional intelligence become more successful and satisfied on the job. These findings hold true for people in various professions across industries and levels, all over the world. Emotional intelligence skills are integral to performing at high levels.

DEVELOPING EQ SKILLS CAN INFLUENCE SCORES ON 16 OF 25 HCAHPS

On the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) survey, 16 of the 25 items can be influenced by emotional intelligence skills. For example, six items about care provided by nurses and doctors include courtesy, respect, listening, and giving clear explanations. Physicians who are self-aware and can self-manage are better able to choose their words and actions to listen, effectively communicate information, and deliver care respectfully. Similarly, nurses who are socially competent are better able to attend to their patients' comfort and understanding, as well as the concerns, questions, and emotions coming from a patient's family or advocate. In a hectic hospital environment filled with patients, worried families, and busy teams of doctors, nurses and staff, emotional intelligence skills contribute to

delivering high quality care. Health care organizations that invest in helping staff better meet the emotional demands that the patient experience requires will see positive feedback from their patients in HCAHPS survey results.

Research Studies

1. HIGH EQ PHYSICIANS ACHIEVE HIGHER JOB SATISFACTION, LOWER BURNOUT AND GREATER PATIENT SATISFACTION.

A 2011 study of 110 doctors and almost 3,000 patients found that doctors high in EQ had greater job satisfaction and were significantly less likely to succumb to burnout. Their patients also self-reported greater patient satisfaction. Weng, Hung, Liu, Cheng, Yen, Chang, & Huang. Associations between emotional intelligence and doctor burnout, job satisfaction and patient satisfaction. *Medical Education*; 45: 835-842, (2011).

2. PHYSICIANS PROMOTED OVER 10 YEARS SHOWED HIGHER SCORES ACROSS EQ COMPETENCIES.

At the Cleveland Clinic in 2003, physicians were assessed on EQ as a part of a hi-potential leadership program. Over a decade, the study tracked physicians that were promoted to a leadership role and found that a significant number scored higher in 3 EQ competencies. Of those that received two leadership promotions, a significant number showed higher EQ scores on their 360 assessments, and higher scores in 10 of 18 EQ competencies. Nowacki, Barss, Spencer, Signe, Christensen, Fralicx, & Stoller. Emotional Intelligence and Physician Leadership Potential: A Longitudinal Study Supporting a Link. *Journal of Health Administration Education*; Vol. 33(1): 23-41, winter (2016).

3. REGULATING EMOTIONS AND WORKING EFFECTIVELY IN TEAMS ARE CRUCIAL EQ SKILLS FOR NURSES.

A study conducted on 23 nursing teams explored the relationship between EQ and nursing team performance. Health care quality and group cohesiveness were each positively affected by emotion regulation in nursing teams. Also, the higher the score is for the "best" team member (optimism/mood regulation), the more the quality of care increases in the whole unit.

Quoidbach & Hansenne. The impact of trait emotional intelligence on nursing team performance and cohesiveness. *Journal of Professional Nursing*; 25(1): 23-29, (2007).

4. HIGH EQ NURSE LEADERS WORK HARDER, PERFORM BETTER AND HAVE HIGHER JOB SATISFACTION.

Nurses with a transformative leadership style that were high in EQ put in the extra effort to achieve, were more effective at their work, and more satisfied with their jobs. Tyczkowski, Vandenhouten, Reilly, Bansal, Kubsch & Jakkola. Emotional intelligence (EI) and nursing leadership styles among nurse managers. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*; 39(2): 172-180, (2015).

5. EQ INCREASES NURSE PERFORMANCE AND RETENTION.

In a study of 350 nurses, higher emotional intelligence scores positively affected performance, career-length, and retention scores. Codier, Freel, Kamikawa, Kooker, & Shoultz. Emotional intelligence, performance, and retention in clinical staff nurses. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*; Oct-Dec 33(4): 310-316, (2009).

6. HOSPITAL STAFF USE CORE EQ SKILLS DIFFERENTLY BASED ON THEIR ROLE.

This survey-based study conducted on a variety of hospital staff shows that nurses tend to rely the most heavily on self-awareness and social awareness, physicians on self-management, and administrative employees on relationship management. Efkarpidis, Efkarpidis, & Zyga. A study of the emotional intelligence of employees at a district hospital of Greece. *International Journal of Caring Sciences*; 5(1), (2012).

7. EQ POSITIVELY AFFECTS NURSE HEALTH AND STRESS MANAGEMENT.

Many nurses suffer from stress and health issues as a result of the nature of their work. In this survey-based study, researchers found that nurses high in emotional clarity, repair, and regulation were significantly better at managing their stress. Landa, Lopez-Zafra, Martos, & del Carmen Aguilar-Luzon. The relationship between emotional intelligence, occupational stress and health in nurses: A questionnaire survey. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*; 45(6): 888-901, (2008).

8. THROUGH THE RECIPROCAL TRANSFER OF EMOTIONS BETWEEN LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS, ALSO KNOWN AS EMOTIONAL CONTAGION, A POSITIVE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE IN FOLLOWERS CAN BE CREATED.

This paper shows how emotional skills and complementary social skills are essential for effective leadership through a literature review and discussion of ongoing research. Authenticity appears to play an important role. In a study involving 135 leaders and 207 followers, suppressing and faking emotions yielded lower ratings in the quality of leader-member relationships and job satisfaction. Riggio & Reichard. The emotional and social intelligences of effective leadership. Kravis Leadership Institute, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, (2008).

9. HIGHER EQ CONTRIBUTED TO DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL ONWARD.

A literature review of 16 studies examined the role of emotional intelligence in healthcare students' success and their interactions with patients (11 studies on postgraduates, 4 on undergraduates, 1 on medical school applicants). This review found that higher EQ positively contributed to doctor-patient relationships, empathy, teamwork, communication skills, stress management, organizational commitment, and leadership. Arora, Ashrafian, Davis, Athanasiou, Darzi, and Sevdalis. Emotional intelligence in medicine: a systematic review through the context of the ACGME competencies. *Medical Education*; 44: 749-764, (2010).

10. THE POSITIVE CONNECTION BETWEEN EQ, PATIENT-SURGEON RELATIONSHIPS, AND PATIENT RATINGS.

According to patient ratings in a study of 50 surgeons, EQ had a positive effect on patient-surgeon relationships. This in turn positively impacted patient satisfaction. After surgery, empathy (a key component of EQ) was found to be especially important to patient satisfaction. Weng, Steed, Yu, Liu, Hsu, Yu, & Chen. The effect of surgeon empathy and emotional intelligence on patient satisfaction. *Advances in Health Sciences Education*; 16: 591-600, (2011).

11. THE ROLE OF EQ IN CLINICAL PERFORMANCE AND BURNOUT AMONG UCSF INTERNAL MEDICINE RESIDENTS.

A 2009 UC San Francisco study measured the EQ of 28 internal medicine residents at the start of the academic year. Results found that higher EQ scores at the end of the year related significantly to higher ratings in overall clinical performance and medical interviewing. Higher EQ scores correlated with lower ratings of burnout. Satterfield, J., Swenson S., & Rabow, M. Emotional intelligence in internal medicine residents: Educational implications for clinical performance and burnout. Division of General Internal Medicine, Department of Medicine, University of California San Francisco. Annual Behavior Science Medical Education; 14(2): 65-68, (2009).

12. PRACTICING HIGH-EQ BEHAVIORS HELPS FORM NEW NEURAL CONNECTIONS IN THE BRAIN, CEMENTING LEARNING AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE.

Repetition is the mechanism for how people increase their emotional intelligence. New neural connections are formed with conscious repeated practice until those connections solidify to make a new behavior an automatic, unconscious habit in the brain. David Rock interview with Jeffrey M. Schwartz, M.D. A brain-based approach to coaching. International Journal of Coaching in Organizations; 4(2): 32-43, (2006).

About TalentSmartEQ

TalentSmartEQ is the world's #1 provider of emotional intelligence (EQ). More than 75% of the Fortune 500 companies rely on our products and services. All of our cutting-edge assessments are easy to use, based on rigorous research, and include our proprietary e-learning and Goal-Tracking System™. Our training programs and coaching services ensure new skills are applied immediately. Our #1 best-selling, award-winning book Emotional Intelligence 2.0 is a groundbreaking addition to the application of EQ in the workplace.

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