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Analyzing the communication through metaphors between nurse and patients

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Introduction: This study incorporated a theoretical framework based on four worldviews, each with an underlying foundational metaphor (root metaphor). The use of these root metaphors (formism, mechanism, contextualism, and organicism) can have an explanatory function and serve to impart new meanings, as each type of metaphor can lead to a particular interpretation. The study aimed to extract and discuss the root metaphors, with a view to analyzing the communication between health professionals and patients.

Methods: In a case study in Spain over a six-month period, we analyzed the content of recorded, transcribed interviews conducted by one nurse with 32 patients who had chronic illnesses. We inductively extracted five categories that emerged from the interviews: blood sugar, cholesterol, exercise, blood pressure and diet.

Results: The results show that the nurse tended to primarily use two worldviews: mechanism and formism. In contrast, patients tended to favor mechanism when discussing cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels, whereas contextualism was predominant when the category was diet or exercise.

Conclusions: This study adds to the existing literature on health professionals and patients' communication. It shows how the use of Pepper's root metaphors helps to analyze the communication between the nurse and patients. Furthermore, it shows they are both using different root metaphors when they are talking about illness and treatments especially regarding blood sugar, cholesterol, exercise, blood pressure and diet. Further qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to solidify these findings.

Biography

Isabel Alvarez is an Associate Professor at Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain. She has completed her PhD at University of Barcelona. She has published several papers in reputed journals. Her research interests include "Helping to understand the communication between health professionals and patients by providing tools for their communication".

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