

How the doctor's behaviour influences the patient's behaviour

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Introduction: The communication between doctor and patient substantially influences therapy outcome. The therapeutic relationship is not only characterized by verbal communication but also by nonverbal behaviour. Nonverbal behavior is associated with cognitive, emotional and interactive processes. In particular, self-touching behaviour reflects conceptualization processes.

Methods: Data material taken from the KoMPASS study, dealing with a communication training for oncologists, comprises fifteen video-taped 10-minutes doctor-patient-actor encounters. In each of the consultations, the same actor, who pretends to be a patient with cancer, is confronted with a bad message, in our data only by a female oncologist. The doctor's and patient's hand movement behaviour is analyzed by two independent blind raters with the NEUROGES-ELAN coding system. For parallel-forms reliability, the behaviour is coded with automated approach. Furthermore, the doctors' negotiation is assessed by a questionnaire evaluating communicative competence (KEK).

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Preliminary results: Thus far, first four minutes of four filmed doctor-patient sessions have been analyzed with the NEUROGES-ELAN system. In two encounters, both patient-actor and doctor displayed a high frequency of *on body* movements. A preliminary analysis of the annotations created using an automatic tool also suggests correlation of *on body* movements between patient and doctor. The KEK has already been assessed for all sessions. The scores range from 18 to 35. A high frequency of *on body* movements correlated with a low KEK score, reflecting a low communicative competence, whereas a high frequency of *in space* movements correlated with a high KEK score.

Preliminary discussion: The preliminary results suggest that a doctor's low communicative competence, as measured with the KEK, is associated with a high frequency of self-touching behaviour and a low frequency of gestures in both the patient and the doctor. The findings suggest that in interaction with a doctor with a high communicative competence, the patient is less occupied with arousal regulation and instead, has more resources for conceptual processes. The further analysis serves to explore how the doctor's hand movement behaviour influences the patient's behaviour.