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## Communication Skills Training for Residents: Which Variables Predict Learning of Skills?

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to determine variables associated (predictors and correlates) with the learning of assessment and supportive skills in the context of a communication skills training for medical residents. **Methods:** Learning was measured by comparing residents' communication skills in a simulated consultation before and after a communication skills training. Communication skills were transcribed and tagged with a computer-assisted program. Potential variables associated with learning (residents' characteristics, contextual characteristics and pre-training communication skills) were measured before the training and entered in regression analysis. **Results:** Fifty-six residents followed the training between 2002 and 2006. Poor pre-training assessment and supportive skills predicted the respective learning of these skills. Better assessment skills' learning was predicted by copings (*i.e.* lower level of emotional coping), lower levels of self-efficacy and depersonalization. Better supportive skills' learning was predicted by a lower work experience and associated with a higher training attendance rate. **Conclusions:** Predictors and correlates of assessment and supportive skills learning were different. Trainers needed to detect certain residents' characteristics (*i.e.* depersonalization) in order to optimize assessment skills learning. Trainers needed to be aware that supportive skills are difficult to learn and to teach and may need more training hours.

### KEYWORDS

Communication Skills Training; Medical Residents; Assessment and Supportive Skills; Predictors and Correlates of Learning

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