

# Clinicians response to patients' emotions is associated with visit length

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Beach et al evaluated the association of clinician responses to patient emotions during a clinic visit. Researchers audio-recorded 41 clinicians with 342 unique patients as part of the maRIPPOHSA (Maximizing Respect and Improving Patient Outcomes in HIV and Substance Abuse) Study. They classified physicians' responses to patient emotions as either providing space or reducing space for patients to elaborate on their

emotions.

Within these categories, they identified these responses as either explicit or non-explicit, meaning that the physician either named the emotion in their response or did not. They found that patients repeated their emotions when physicians provided space. When physicians explicitly addressed emotions, visit length was shorter. Finally, they noticed that as the clinic visit progressed, the physician was less likely to respond by providing space.

The study took place in an HIV ambulatory care center, where patients received both specialty HIV care and [primary care](#). The mean visit length was 30.4 minutes with 1,028 emotional expressions total. Most clinician responses provided space (81 percent) and most were non-explicit (56 percent). Beach and her colleagues concluded that if saving time is a goal, clinicians should consider their responses that explicitly address patient emotions.

The research was published in *The Annals of Family Medicine*.

**More information:** Mary Catherine Beach et al, Clinician Response to Patient Emotion: Impact on Subsequent Communication and Visit Length, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2021). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2740](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2740)

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