

Effective and Critical Communications

*According to The Joint Commission, poor communication is the number one cause of medical errors.
Improving staff communication is a perennial National Patient Safety Goal.*

Importance of communicating effectively

- According to the [American Academy of Communication in Healthcare](#), communication is the key to exceptional patient care for all clinicians.
- Good communication increases patient safety and efficiency.
- Teamwork is best for patients and for the care team.

Use structured communication methods to ensure the clear and accurate exchange of information. Below are common examples.

1. SBAR is the standard for patient handoff and notifications.
 - Situation – Present the headline of the patient’s condition and what is happening.
 - Background – Why the patient is admitted and pertinent history.
 - Assessment – Vital signs and pertinent assessment findings.
 - Recommendation – Be clear and ask about what you want and why you think it is appropriate for the patient.
2. Closed loop communication
 - Messenger states a message and the receiver repeats what they heard aloud. Messenger provides feedback that what is repeated back is correct or not.
 - This allows confirmation of the receipt and clarity of the message and identifies the individual responsible for completing the intervention and allows the team to anticipate next steps.
3. ACLS principles for clear communication
 - Constructive intervention - redirect for patient safety or adherence to protocols.
 - Clear messaging - leaves no room for error; closed loop communication.
 - Knowledge sharing and summarizing - update and integrate information at regular intervals.
 - Clear roles and responsibilities - gives focus to individuals within the group.
 - Know limitations - ask for support when needed.
4. When all else fails, remember to C.U.S.S. Work through this mnemonic device to escalate concern for the situation.
 - C – “I am **C**oncerned about XYZ.”
 - U – “I am **U**ncomfortable with XYZ – I need you to hear my concerns.”
 - S – “This is a patient **S**afety issue – we need to discuss before we proceed.”
 - S – “**S**top, we cannot proceed. I am notifying my supervisor.”
 - Follow the facility escalation policy to obtain the help you need and use the nursing and/or provider chain of command as appropriate.

Communication and Relationship Building Tools

From the American Academy on Communication in Healthcare

P.E.A.R.L.S.

- **Partner** - “If you’d like, I can help get this patient ready to transfer while you update the family.”
- **Empathize** - “You seem frustrated. Is everything OK?”
Acknowledge or Apologize - “This has been a crazy day. You must be exhausted.” “I am sorry I didn’t get those supplies for you; I got pulled into another room.”
- **Respect** - “I admire the focus and sense of calm you bring during codes.”
- **Legitimize** - “Yes, I see what you mean.” “I understand why you might feel that way.”
- **Support** - “I know there’s a lot to remember with so many types of patients on our unit. I’m here to help you when you have questions.”

Health care is a team sport - *you are an important part of the team!*

- Be confident – and practice clear communication.
- Assume all colleagues have good intentions.
- Use available resources.

The heart of communication is advocating for the patient.

References

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