



COMMUNICATION

Communication is the response you get from the message you sent regardless of its intent.

– Author Unknown



SUBSECTIONS

- Communication
- Standards of Effective Communication
- Information Exchange Strategies (e.g., SBAR, Check-back, Call-out, and Handoff)
- Communication Challenges
- Teamwork Actions

TIME: 45 minutes

COMMUNICATION-OBJECTIVES

SAY:

Communication is the lifeline of a well-functioning team. This module provides strategies and tools to improve the effectiveness and promote the sharing of information. Improving the quality of information exchange decreases communication-related errors.

Before we get started, let's review how communication plays a role in the following situation.

Example: A surveyor is reviewing a patient who developed a pressure ulcer. She discussed the case at 10AM with the team leader who agrees that there may be extensive deficient practices and recommends that the surveyor continue to investigate and report back at the end of the day. The team leader then modifies the team assignments and notifies the other team members. At the end of the day the team discovers that several tasks have been done twice as the case was not as serious as first believed and the surveyor finished her investigation at noon. The surveyor then went back to her original assignment, not realizing that duplicative work was being done.



DISCUSSION:

- Where did miscommunication occur in this situation?

SAY:

In this module, we will:

- Describe the importance of communication.
- Recognize the connection between communication and medical error.
- Define communication and discuss the standards of effective communication.
- Describe strategies for information exchange.
- Identify barriers, tools, strategies, and outcomes to communication.

Objectives

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MODULE TIME:

45 minutes

Framework



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SAY:

Communication is an important component of the team process because it serves as a coordinating mechanism or supporting structure for teamwork. Communication skills interplay directly with leadership, situation monitoring, and mutual support. Team leaders provide guidance through verbal feedback. Effective communication skills are needed to convey clear information, provide awareness of roles and responsibilities, and explain how performance impacts outcomes. Team members monitor situations by communicating any changes to keep the team informed and the integrity of the survey. Communication facilitates a culture of mutual support.

This module focuses on communication. It informs participants about the components of effective communication and how communication affects team performance. The communication module covers two areas: communication delivery and information exchange. Communication delivery includes the intended audience, the mode of communication (written and oral), and the delivery technique (clear and brief). Effective information exchange involves:

- Sending techniques—seeking information from all available sources, sharing information before asked, and providing situation updates as necessary
- Recurring techniques—analyzing the data (information) provided and synthesizing it into or modifying the existing plan of care
- Verifying techniques—checking back information to investigate the intent of the sender
- Validating techniques—confirming the intent of the sender orally or in writing

As an unknown author said, “Communication is the response you get to a message you sent regardless of its intent.”

COMMUNICATION IS...



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KEY POINTS:

- Communication is the “exchange of information between a sender and a receiver.”
- Consider the audience, your chosen method of communication, and the standards for that method.

SAY:

Communication can be defined as the “exchange of information between a sender and a receiver.” (Salas and McIntyre 1995) More specifically, it is “the process by which information is clearly and accurately exchanged between two or more team members in the prescribed manner and with proper terminology and the ability to clarify or acknowledge the receipt of information.”

A tremendous body of evidence exists to support the efficacy of good communication skills for effective teamwork. For example, Cannon-Bowers et al. found that communication comprises two critical skills: exchanging information and consulting with others. Information exchange was defined by behaviors such as closed-loop communication, which is the initiation of a message by a sender, the receipt and acknowledgement of the message by the receiver, and the verification of the message by the initial sender. Other behaviors include information sharing, procedural talk, and volunteering and requesting information. Likewise, Dickinson and McIntyre found that effective communication required information to be exchanged in a set manner using proper terminology and acknowledgement of the information received.

Some things to consider when communicating:

- The audience—How might your interaction with a family be different than a physician?
- The mode of communication—Verbal, non-verbal, written, email
- Standards associated with the specific mode of communication (e.g., using simple sentences) – Non-verbal communication requires verbal clarification to avoid making assumptions that can lead to error. The simple rule is, "When in doubt, check it out, offer information or ask a question."
- The power of non-verbal communication—The way you make eye contact and the way you hold your body during a conversation are signals that can be picked up by the person with whom you are communicating, although powerful, non-verbal communication does not provide an acceptable mode to verify or validate (acknowledge) information. Visual cues also provide another layer of non-verbal communication.

Continued...

COMMUNICATION IS... (continued)

ASK:

- What are some ways you non-verbally communicated or received information? How was it taken?
- Do you know if that was the actual intent of the person?
- How could a surveyor's non-verbal clues limit the information received during an patient interview?

Examples:

A facility staff member starts to look anxious and around the area when approaching a surveyor. When she asks to speak with the surveyor, the surveyor, picking up her non-verbal cues, asks if she would like to speak in private.

SAY:

- Albert Mehrabian (1971) found that there are basically three elements in any face-to-face communication: words, tone of voice, and body language.
- These three elements account differently for the meaning of the message: words account for 7%, tone of voice accounts for 38%, and body language accounts for 55% of the message.

ASK:

Either individually or in small groups as appropriate, ask the surveyors to describe one instance where they observed positive non-verbal communication and one instance where they observed negative communication. Have the participants identify the key factors in both circumstances. If working in small groups- have each group share their examples.

STANDARDS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Standards of Effective Communication

- Complete
 - Communicate all relevant information
- Clear
 - Convey information that is plainly understood
- Brief
 - Communicate the information in a concise manner
- Timely
 - Offer and request information in an appropriate timeframe
 - Verify authenticity
 - Validate or acknowledge information

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SAY:

Whether sharing information with the team, patients/families, facility staff, etc. communication must meet four standards to be effective.

Effective communication is:

- Complete
 - Communicate all relevant information while avoiding unnecessary details that may lead to confusion.
- Clear
 - Use information that is plainly understood.
 - Use common or standard terminology when communicating with members of the team.
- Brief
 - Be concise.
- Timely
 - Be dependable about offering and requesting information.
 - Avoid delays in relaying information to the team or facility (when appropriate) that could be indicative of a significant issue (such as excessively hot water temperatures in patient care areas).

Examples:

A well-written interview summary is:

- Complete—It includes date, time, interviewee name and title, and a summary of all salient points.
- Clear—It is clearly written and legible (when not using a laptop).
- Brief—It contains only the necessary information.
- Timely—Notes may be taken during or written immediately after the interview to be sure all of the investigative findings are included during data analysis.

Information Exchange Strategies

- Situation–Background–Assessment–Recommendation (SBAR)
- Call-Out
- Check-Back
- Handoff

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SAY:

A number of strategies to potentially reduce errors associated with miscommunication or lack of information are listed. These four strategies are simple to integrate into daily practice and have been shown to improve team performance.

- Situation–Background–Assessment–Recommendation (SBAR)
- Call-Outs
- Check-Backs
- Handoffs

ASK:

By a raise of hands, how many of you are familiar with these strategies?

SBAR PROVIDES...

SAY:

The SBAR technique provides a standardized framework for members of the team to communicate. You may also refer to this as the ISBAR where “I” stands for Introductions.

SBAR is an easy-to-remember, concrete mechanism that is useful for framing any conversation, especially a critical one requiring an immediate attention and action. SBAR originated in the U.S. Navy submarine community to quickly provide critical information to the captain. It provides members of the team with an easy and focused way to set expectations for what will be communicated and how. Standards of communication are essential for developing teamwork. In phrasing a conversation with another member of the team, consider the following:

- Situation—What is happening?
- Background—What is the background?
- Assessment—What do I think the problem is?
- Recommendation—What would I recommend?

SBAR provides a vehicle for individuals to speak up and express concern in a concise manner.

ASK:

Can you give an example of communication exchanges between surveyors, preceptors, hospital staff, etc. where SBAR has been or could be used effectively?

SBAR provides...

- A framework for team members to effectively communicate information to one another
- Communicate the following information:
 - Situation—What is going on with the patient?
 - Background—What is the clinical background or context?
 - Assessment—What do I think the problem is?
 - Recommendation—What would I recommend?

Remember to introduce yourself...

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KEY POINTS:

- SBAR stands for: Situation– Background– Assessment– Recommendation.
- The SBAR is one technique that can be used to standardize communication, which is essential for developing teamwork.
- SBAR creates a consistent format for information to be sent and creates an expectation for information to be received.

Call-Out is...

SAY:

A call-out is a tactic used to communicate critical information during an emergent event. Critical information called out in these situations helps the team anticipate and prepare during an emergent event. It also benefits a recorder (when present). One important aspect of a call-out is directing the information to a specific individual.

A call-out is normally never used in a survey, however, surveyors may observe this during an emergency.

ASK:

- When might you see a “call-out” used?

Call-Out is...

A strategy used to communicate important or critical information

- It informs all team members simultaneously during emergency situations
- It helps team members anticipate next steps



...what information would you want called out?

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CHECK-BACK IS...

SAY:

A check-back is a closed-loop communication strategy used to verify and validate information exchanged. The strategy involves the sender initiating a message, the receiver accepting the message and confirming what was communicated, and the sender verifying that the message was received.

Example:

Team Leader: “Let’s review the work plan- I have listed that you will complete a review of practitioner credentialing, is that what you have also?”

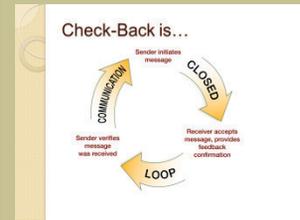
Surveyor: Yes, I am getting the practitioner files now to review.

Team Leader: That’s great. Let me know if you have any concerns when the review is completed.



DISCUSSION:

- Identify the sender and receiver?
 - Team Leader was the sender
 - Surveyor was the receiver
- How did the sender and receiver “close the loop?”
 - Surveyor acknowledges and repeats the task
 - Team leader acknowledges
- What communication errors were avoided?
 - Both Team Leader and Surveyor have a clear understanding of the survey task avoiding potential scheduling issues, duplicative efforts from other team members, and potential omission of required tasks.



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WHAT IS A HANDOFF?



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KEY POINTS:

- Using the handoff technique can decrease errors through the effective sharing of information.

SAY:

When a team member is temporarily or permanently relieved of duty, there is a risk that necessary information about the survey may not be communicated. The handoff strategy is designed to maintain continuity of the survey process.

State survey agencies may have specific policies regarding this process. Clear communication between the surveyors and team leader are very important.

ASK:

When do you typically use handoffs in your agency?

How does your agency maintain the flow and integrity of the survey when this happens?

ASK:

- What are some barriers to communication that can lessen the effectiveness of survey teams?

SAY:

Challenges may include:

- Language barriers—Non-English speaking patients/staff pose particular challenges.
- Distractions—Can take your attention away from the current task at hand.
- Physical proximity .
- Personalities—Sometimes it is difficult to communicate with particular individuals.
- Workload—During heavy workload times, all of the necessary details may not be communicated, or they may be communicated but not verified.
- Varying communication styles—Healthcare workers have historically been trained with different communication styles.
- Conflict—Disagreements may disrupt the flow of information between communicating individuals.
- Verification of information—Verify and acknowledge information exchanged.

ASK:

Given the challenges of your team, which techniques or approaches would you use to help eliminate these challenges?

- Brief, huddle, or debrief
- Two-Challenge rule
- SBAR
- Check-Back
- Handoff

- Communication
- #### Communication Challenges
- Language barrier
 - Distractions
 - Physical proximity
 - Personalities
 - Workload
 - Varying communication styles
 - Conflict
 - Lack of information verification

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KEY POINTS:

- Although you may run into communication challenges on a daily basis, there are many strategies to assist in eliminating or decreasing those challenges.

Communication

Barriers to Team Effectiveness

BARRIERS	TOOLS and STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistency in Team Membership • Lack of Time • Lack of Information Sharing • Diversity • Colloquialisms • Conventional Training • Competency • Strong Communication Styles • Conflict • Lack of Connection and Follow-Up with Co-Workers • Overload • Fatigue • Misheard • Misinterpretation of Cues • Lack of Role Clarity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief • Huddle • Debrief • STEP • Cross Monitoring • Feedback • Advocacy and Assertion • Two-Challenge Rule • CUS • DEBIC Script • Collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Mental Model • Adaptability • Team Orientation • Mutual Trust • Team Performance • Improving Patient Safety through the Survey Process!

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SAY:

Within this module, we identified some barriers to a team’s effective communication and a variety of communication tools. Improved communication provides for a more effective survey team.

Good communication facilitates development of mutual trust and shared mental models, enabling teams to quickly adapt to changing situations. Communication is especially important as the environment becomes more complex (e.g., emergency situations)—it distributes needed information to other team members and facilitates the continual updating of the team’s shared mental model and its engagement in other team activities.

SAY:

Team members:

- Communicate effectively.
- Seek information from all available sources.
- Verify and share information.
- Practice communication tools and strategies used by your agency.

Communication is an important component of the team process by serving as a coordinating mechanism or supporting structure for teamwork. Communication skills interplay directly with leadership, situation monitoring, and mutual support. Team leaders provide guidance through verbal feedback. Leaders also promote interaction among team members by clarifying team roles and defining team norms for conflict resolution. Effective communication skills are needed to clearly convey information, provide awareness of roles and responsibilities, or define how performance impacted outcomes.

ASK:

- What actions will you take to improve your and your team's communication skills?



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