


Effective Perioperative Communication to Enhance Patient Care 1.1

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Purpose/Goal

To provide the learner with knowledge specific to effective perioperative communication.

Objectives

1. Explain how communication affects patient safety.
2. Identify the components of effective communication.
3. Discuss barriers and challenges to effective communication.
4. Identify ways in which leaders can help improve communication.

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As an employee of PDI, Inc, and as a recipient of an honorarium from the Competency and Credentialing Institute for publication of this article, Dr Garrett has declared an affiliation that could be perceived as posing a potential conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

The behavioral objectives for this program were created by Helen Starbuck Pashley, MA, BSN, CNOR, clinical editor, with consultation from Susan Bakewell, MS, RN-BC, director, Perioperative Education. Ms Starbuck Pashley and Ms Bakewell have no declared affiliations that could be perceived as posing potential conflicts of interest in the publication of this article.

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ABSTRACT

Breakdowns in health care communication are a significant cause of sentinel events and associated patient morbidity and mortality. Effective communication is a necessary component of a patient safety program, which enables all members of the interdisciplinary health care team to effectively manage their individual roles and responsibilities in the perioperative setting; set expectations for safe, high-reliability care; and measure and assess outcomes. To sustain a culture of safety, effective communication should be standardized, complete, clear, brief, and timely. Executive leadership and support helps remove institutional barriers and address challenges to support the engagement of patients in health care communication, which has been shown to improve outcomes, reduce costs, and improve the patient experience. *AORN J* 104 (August 2016) 112-117. © AORN, Inc, 2016. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.aorn.2016.06.001>

Key words: *perioperative communication, TeamSTEPPS, Triple Aim, health care communications, interdisciplinary collaboration.*

Research indicates that the primary cause of medical errors and associated mortality and morbidity is communication breakdowns in health care settings.¹⁻³ Based on extensive research into the most effective communication methods, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recommends using the TeamSTEPPS program to assess and improve communication.⁴ Effective communication enhances patient safety and serves as the basis for effective teamwork. According to The Joint Commission, nearly 66% of all reported sentinel events from 1995 to 2005 occurred as a result of ineffective communication; in addition, between 2010 and 2013, ineffective communication ranked as one of the top three causes of reported sentinel events (eg, wrong site surgery, administration of incorrect medications, surgical fires).²

Communication enables all members of the interdisciplinary team to effectively manage their roles and responsibilities, set expectations, and measure and assess outcomes. Improving the effectiveness of communication among caregivers is one of The Joint Commission National Patient Safety Goals for Hospitals.⁵ A sustainable culture of open communication requires that communication be standardized, complete, clear, brief, and timely.⁵ Executive leadership and support is necessary to remove institutional barriers and address challenges that might hinder both short-term and long-term progress toward building a transparent and communicative culture to enhance safety. Engaging and communicating with patients has been demonstrated to improve outcomes, reduce costs, and improve the patient's experience.⁶

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