

CARE TEAM CORNER

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Nurse to Nurse

Insights from the front line of care.

Every facility is unique. That is why Spacelabs' team of Clinical Education Consultants (CECs) work with hospitals across the country every week to help ensure device installations are successful and users have the knowledge and confidence to get the most out of their new monitoring systems. CECs work closely with hospital care teams, delivering training customized to each facility's unique workflow and environment to help caregivers optimize their workflow as well as improve patient care and safety.

Overview

This edition focuses on the importance of communication. Solid communication plays a vital role throughout a patient's entire healthcare experience, and a large portion of the accountability for good communication lies with the nursing staff, given the constant contact they have with patients and families. But effective communication extends beyond nurse-patient interactions and involves the entire patient care team. Communication contributes significantly to how patients evaluate their satisfaction with the care they receive.⁽¹⁾

This paper discusses the following:

- The benefits of good communication
- Key communication skills for care team providers

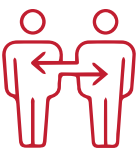


Our Author

Kim has been a Registered Nurse for 26 years and a Certified Critical Care Nurse (CCRN-K) for 17 years. Prior to her career at Spacelabs, she spent 17 years as a trauma/critical care nurse and as a PRN Emergency Department nurse in Tyler, Texas. Kim has been a member of the AACN since 2004 and served as president of the local East Texas chapter for two years. She also has been an ACLS instructor/coordinator for local hospitals for five years.



The Benefits of Good Communication



Communication is an essential part of all aspects of healthcare, including prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and education. Effective communication starting with the nursing staff is essential for creating a positive patient experience, offering patient-centric care, and ensuring patient safety. Every step of the way, from patient intake to patient discharge and beyond, nurses as well as other care team members must use effective communication to provide the best care possible to their patients.⁽²⁾

Nurses possess a tremendous amount of medical knowledge and clinical expertise. Yet their biggest challenge — and perhaps most crucial task— is communication. Patient Care Teams are made up of different nurses, physicians, and other healthcare professionals. It is critical that clear and effective communication takes place among all members of the care team to build strong work relationships, share resources, and solve patient issues. Healthcare team members focus on patient-centered care by doing the following⁽³⁾:

- Collaborating with one another
- Maintaining confidentiality in communications
- Providing timely informed consent
- Allowing adequate time to talk to patients and families
- Displaying empathy to patients and family members dealing with their loved one's medical situation
- Managing the ongoing stress associated with patient care

One reference article suggests that patients are less likely to remember specific medical procedures than the communication and human interaction from health professionals, and thus judge the quality of their care by these markers. They have more confidence in health professionals who communicate effectively, which in turn makes it more likely that treatment regimens are followed, or advice taken.⁽⁴⁾

Research has shown that effective communication in nursing not only benefits patients, but it also benefits nurses. When nurses can communicate effectively with each other and other members of the care team, they get more job satisfaction, and morale improves. Poor communication, on the other hand, is part of the reason for a high staff turnover and excessive stress in healthcare positions.⁽⁵⁾

Key communication skills for care team providers.

Consider the following. During a four-day hospital stay, a patient may interact with 50 different employees, including physicians, nurses, technicians, and other care team providers.⁽⁶⁾ Effective clinical practice involves many situations where critical information must be clearly communicated. Team collaboration is essential. When healthcare professionals are not communicating effectively, patient safety is at risk for several reasons: lack of critical information, misinterpretation of information between care team providers, unclear orders may be passed over mobile devices or other communication devices, and finally, changes in a patient's condition may not be dealt with in a timely manner or overlooked completely.⁽⁶⁾

Effective communication skills.

Nurse communication skills are one of the most important elements for success. But it doesn't stop there. All members of the care team need these skills to be effective in their positions. Here are some of the top communication skills required:⁽⁷⁾

1. **Nonverbal Communication.** Using eye contact and body language, posture, and smiling can go a long way when communicating with patients, families, and colleagues.
2. **Active Listening.** Listening to understand is important and one of the best principles of active listening. There are nonverbal indicators of active listening as well, such as maintaining eye contact and nodding your head to indicate an understanding of what is being discussed. While listening, maintain a relaxed posture; do not cross your arms.
3. **Personal Relationships.** Building trust is at the center of this. Demonstrating an interest in your relationship, no matter how long it will exist, is key. Showing compassion and kindness helps patients to feel accepted and builds trust.
4. **Inspire Trust.** Plain and simple, keep your word. Do not make promises you cannot keep. Listen to patient and family concerns and take their concerns seriously.
5. **Show Compassion.** Hospitals are scary places. Treat patients with dignity and respect. They are frightened, feeling helpless, perhaps depressed. Being empathetic as part of your communication tool bag goes a long way in your communication path.
6. **Cultural Awareness.** Be mindful that cultural differences may cause your actions to be interpreted differently than you intended. Strive for cultural awareness in all your actions and remember all patients are unique.
7. **Educating Patients.** Patients and families look to nurses to educate them about disease processes, medications, and self-care skills. One way to ensure understanding is to ask patients and/or their families questions about the information just provided. This is also referred to as teach-back techniques.
8. **Written Communication.** This is one of the essential components of good communication. Written communication must be easy to read and concise. Using universal abbreviations is acceptable as well.
9. **Presentation Skills.** This is an evolving skill that constantly needs to be worked. Staff nurses as well as nursing leadership need this skill in order to be prepared to present to other staff members or organizations. Plan your presentation, concisely communicate key points, and make certain your subject matter resonates with your audience.
10. **Verbal Communication.** This is an indispensable skill to have as a nurse. Always consider your audience, speak clearly, at a slow to moderate rate, and be aware of your tone. You want your audience to engage with you and you will have the best success by keeping these factors in mind.⁽⁸⁾



Timely communication and accountability are key to running a successful clinical care team. Whether managing a central monitoring station or telemetry care unit, participating in patient rounding, or providing bedside care, reinforcing a solid communication plan with clear escalation strategies facilitates patient-centric care as well as clinical team satisfaction.⁽⁹⁾

Although some nurses are excellent natural communicators, most nurses will need to continue to refine their communication and interpersonal skills during the span of their career to be the best communicator possible. In addition, clinical collaboration tools are available to facilitate workflow communication between departments and care team members to ensure the best care possible.



Our Spacelabs CEC team possesses extensive experience in all care areas.

At Spacelabs, we believe that collaboration is the key to successful training and use of our products. Our goal is to ensure that the most efficient workflows and alarm management practices are established and implemented, so your care team can provide the best care experience for your patients and their families. Our Clinical Education Consultant (CEC) team possesses extensive experience in all care areas, delivering tailored and relevant learning to meet your clinical requirements, workflows, and organizational goals. Spacelabs Clinical Offerings include a blend of eLearning, onsite installation, and consultative education provided by nurse clinicians and specialists.

If you are interested in learning more about our services or products, please contact us at 1-800-522-7025.

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