Interprofessional Teams: Communication Effect on Adherence to Protocols

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Background

• Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel identified communication as 1 of 4 core competency domains for interprofessional collaborative practice.¹
• Only 7 of 13 healthcare professional associations explicitly define communication in their professional codes of practice.²
• Joint Commission data indicates ineffective communication has remained in top 3 root causes of sentinel events.³

Methods

• Search Strategies: Pubmed, MEDLINE, CINAHL, Cochrane Library
• Inclusion Criteria: Communication pathway between >2 disciplines within inpatient setting.
• Theoretical Approach: Diffusion of Innovation, or the process that occurs as new practices are communicated through channels over time among team members while adopting its use.

Conclusions

• Communication is a complex adaptive process requiring acknowledgement of the link between processes and results.
• Healthcare must take a multifactorial approach to effective communication addressing interpersonal, educational and organizational factors.
• Actively address communication barriers in each stage of the change process.
• Communication pathways should create conditions that prompt, reward, and facilitate positive behavior.
• Reinforcement of positive behavior can enhance effective communication, sustain communication techniques, and increase adherence to processes and protocols.
• Patients are more complex, aging, and have multiple chronic conditions. It will take an interprofessional team with multiple perspectives, skills, and effective communication to optimize care.

Recommendations

• Align healthcare professional associations code of practice with interprofessional teamwork core competencies, specifically communication.
• Focus on utilization of communication pathways should be included in any process change to facilitate communication. Ensure the message was sent, received and acknowledged along with follow-up back to sender.
• Additional research in the field of communication within healthcare is warranted to align our practices with institutional goals.

References