

Taking Charge - 3 Techniques for Communicating Effectively

Charge nurses engage in both horizontal and vertical communication at the unit level. They are seen as the pivotal point person, or 'go to' person. They must master the art of assertive and persuasive communication, as well as develop negotiation and listening skills. Conversations may be initiated by staff, patients, families, physicians, hospital leadership, or by the charge nurses themselves.

Effective communication is essential for the reduction of medical errors and promotion of safety practices. Structured techniques which permit assertive clarification of team communication and avoidance of errors can be promoted and role modeled by the charge nurse. Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS) is an evidence-based communication model that has been developed for use in clinical practice with funding from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Tools in the model include the Two-Challenge Rule, Call-Outs, and Check-Backs (AHRQ).

FACT:

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- The **Two-Challenge Rule** requires the communicator to voice their concern at least twice to receive acknowledgment by the receiver. This rule may be invoked when a member of the healthcare team suggests or performs an intervention that deviates from the standard of care. The charge nurse would assertively voice their concern at least two times and if the team member who is being challenged does not acknowledge this concern, the charge nurse would then take a stronger action or utilize the hospital chain of command as needed.
- **Call-Outs** are a strategy that the charge nurse can use to inform all team members of crucial information during emergencies to assist team members in anticipating what comes next. For instance, during a stroke alert, the results of the patient's NIH scale and the need to transport the patient as rapidly as possible for a CT scan may be communicated out loud to the rest of the team.
- **Check-Backs** require the sender of the communication to verify the information that is being received by the other team member, or to use closed-loop communication. For example, the charge nurse is often responsible for verifying that telephone order read backs are performed according to policy.

Adapted from: Sherman, R. and Eggenberger, T. (2009),
Taking charge: What every charge nurse needs to know . NURSES FIRST,
2(4), 6-10.

