

Patient Safety 103: Teamwork and Communication
Summary Sheet

Lesson 1: Why Are Teamwork and Communication Important?

- A team is “a group of people who work together in a coordinated way, which maximizes each team member’s strengths, to achieve a common goal.”
- Communication is a critical element in effective teamwork. Teams that do not communicate well are not truly teams, but merely groups of individuals working side by side.
- Effective teamwork and communication are critical to functioning safely in health care. They help groups navigate competing priorities, overcome issues associated with human factors, and reduce the risk of error.
- No matter what role you will fill in a health care organization, you will be a member of a patient care team, and thus you have a responsibility to communicate effectively and value the contributions of other team members.

Lesson 2: Basic Tools and Techniques

- Effective teams use specific, structured techniques and behaviors that help communicate the appropriate messages in an efficient manner. These techniques and behaviors include:
 - **Briefings:** Short, structured meetings in which the patient care team comes together to talk about a patient, procedure, or situation.
 - **Debriefing:** A concise exchange that occurs after such events have completed to identify what happened, what was learned, and what can be done better next time.
 - **SBAR:** Situation, background, assessment, recommendation.
 - **Critical language:** An agreed-upon set of terms that indicates to all members of a patient care team that there is a problem.
 - **Psychological safety:** When an individual feels comfortable expressing an opinion, mentioning problems, or correcting errors.

Lesson 3: Communication During Times of Transition

- Ineffective handoffs — due to complexity and issues related to human factors — can increase the likelihood of error and patient harm.
- Verbal repeat back can be a useful communication tool when making a handoff. The tool involves four actions:
 - The sender concisely states information to the receiver.
 - The receiver then repeats back what he or she heard.
 - The sender then acknowledges that the repeat back was correct or makes a correction.
 - The process continues until participants verify a shared understanding.

Lesson 4: Developing and Executing Effective Plans

- By using communication tools and team behaviors, patient care teams can prevent errors. And **YOU** are a critical member of a patient care team.

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