

ger goal of preventing wounds in the first place. Once the patients with wounds are discussed, the team should review all high-risk patients to ensure proper preventative measures are in place and care planned. All patients should be quickly reviewed for evidence of:

- decline or change in mobility and activity
- new onset or change in continence status
- decline in nutritional status
- decline or change in cognition.

Any triggers in these areas should prompt a review of the plan of care to ensure they are being effectively addressed.

Review and update the plan

The third key ingredient for success is to use meeting time to review and update the plan of care. I've observed highly productive meetings and great discussions of the care the facility is providing. Then I review the medical record and discover that none of the interventions discussed are on the plan of care. Always review the patient's plan of care to ensure it's accurate, reflects all interventions, and is up to date. This will give you peace of mind that the medical record reflects all the good work you're doing and helps make the team meetings feel productive.

Discuss products and supplies

The fourth key ingredient is to take the time to quickly discuss current wound care supplies and products with the team. Ask the team if the current supplies are user-friendly, are adequate, provide good outcomes, and are in good working condition.

Many times staff will not say how they're struggling with, modifying, or not using something until they're asked. Remember that the most expensive product is the one that doesn't work or doesn't get used.

A recipe for success

Using these four key ingredients will lead you to a successful wound team meeting—and a successful program. The mix may not solve your too-many-meetings days, but will give you peace of mind that at least one meeting is productive. ■

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How to keep your communications professional

By Kathleen D. Pagana, PhD, RN

As clinicians, we're proud of the expert care we provide patients. But we also know that just doing our job isn't enough to advance our careers. Mastering good communication skills is essential for all clinicians at all career stages—especially with today's flatter organizational structures and more participatory management styles. Knowing how to communicate in a professional manner can give you the edge you need for career advancement.

Opportunity rarely knocks any more. Instead it may present as a phone call, voice mail, e-mail, or text message. Be sure to use proper etiquette with all communication forms.

Speaking with managers

When dealing with your manager, use a



State your name and phone number twice at the end of a phone message to the recipient doesn't need to replay your message.

solution-focused approach. Don't be a complainer. Some communication experts point out that people complain about things they can do something about—not things they have no power over. For example, they don't complain about their foot size because there's nothing they can do about it. Yet people often complain about their jobs because they're unwilling to take the risk of making a change.

We need to take charge of our lives. We can accept the fact—without complaining—that we're making the choice to stay where we are. Or we can make a request or take action to achieve a desired outcome. Suppose you work on a clinical unit and disagree with the way your manager makes clinical assignments. You have several options:

- Complain to coworkers and make the workplace miserable for others.
- Speak with your manager and make suggestions for improvement.
- Leave your job and go elsewhere if you can't work with your manager to make things better.

If you decide to stay in your job, accept the fact that you've made that choice. Take responsibility for it and stop complaining.

Speaking on the phone with physicians

For clinicians who are not physicians, the key to effective communication with physicians is to remember you're an important member of the healthcare team. An effective way to guide your communication with physicians and other colleagues is to use a tool such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation). Say, for instance, you want to suggest the doctor order an anxiolytic for your patient. Here's how you might do it using **SBAR**:

Situation: "Mrs. Smith is complaining of severe anxiety."

Background: "She is 1 day post-op from a lumbar laminectomy."

Assessment: "She is alert and oriented and her vital signs are stable. She has no numbness or tingling in her extremities."

Recommendation: "She said she takes lorazepam 2 mg orally at when she's anxious. Would you like to order something for her?"

Before ending the conversation, repeat and clarify the medication order (if the doctor gives one).

Telephone

The sound of your voice and your manners are essential components of phone etiquette. Smile—the smile on your face comes through in your voice. Here are five more tips:

1. Get yourself organized before placing the call.
2. Minimize background noise.
3. Immediately identify yourself. Don't assume the recipient will recognize your voice.
4. Concentrate on listening and avoid multi-tasking.

5. Schedule phone conversations to avoid playing phone tag.

Voice mail

Voice mail is an efficient way to communicate. Again, five tips:

1. Always be prepared to leave a message. Jot down your key message points before you call, to avoid stuttering and stammering.
2. Be concise and to the point.
3. State your name and the date, time, and purpose of your call.
4. Enunciate clearly and speak slowly.
5. State your name and phone number twice at the end of the message so the recipient doesn't need to replay your message.

E-mail

In many business settings, e-mail has almost replaced letters and memos. In many cases, an e-mail is a recipient's first impression of you, so follow these tips:

1. Make the subject line specific. This helps the reader prioritize the message and file it for easy retrieval.
2. Use a greeting and a close. It's more polite and less impersonal.
3. Keep your message concise.
4. Keep your tone polite and businesslike.
5. Use your e-mail signature function, which provides several ways to contact you.

Text messages

This form of communication can be the most challenging and unpredictable. Some people send text messages routinely, while others may be unfamiliar with this method. You can't go too far wrong if you take this advice:

1. Get to the point quickly. No one wants to read a long message on a mobile phone.

2. Don't text during meetings. It's rude to do so, and others can hear you clicking away or see the light from your screen.
3. Consider the recipient before using text abbreviations. Some people may not understand text lingo.
4. Consider the time when sending a text. Although you may be awake at 5 a.m., the sound of your incoming message might disturb a sleeping recipient.
5. Don't expect an immediate response to your text. If the message is time sensitive, pick up the phone instead.

Improving the way we speak with managers and physicians can go a long way toward career advancement and professional satisfaction. Common courtesy is just as essential in e-mail, voice mail, and text messages as in face-to-face communication. When you follow the guidelines I've given, you'll elevate your professional communications a few notches.

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