

# **How can TeamSTEPPS Improve Patient Outcomes in the ER? Coaching for Long-term Success**

Susan M. Hohenhaus, MA, RN, FAEN

President, Hohenhaus & Associates, Inc.

[shohenha@ptd.net](mailto:shohenha@ptd.net)



# One night in the ER...

- ...24 patients in the waiting room, all patient treatment areas are full and there is an ambulance on its way in with a critical patient. ETA is 9 minutes. Help! We need a bed, we need to move some patients, the triage nurse is frantic because the patients are upset about waiting...
- WHAT TO DO?!
- A typical response: charge nurse makes decisions alone, works with only one or two other team members moves patients around with little consultation with others. Waiting area is not priority.
- What SHOULD occur: The TEAM must work *together*, sharing the same, correct mental model and utilize effective teamwork and communication skills and tools.

# The Challenge...

- Fluctuations in workload, interruptions, time critical high acuity patient care needs, are constant
- Variability in practice (all levels)
- ED practitioners feel they are already a great team (yet hierarchy common)

# Need for Simplification...

- Complex patient care is continuously changing and being updated, but the basics of emergency care remain the same.
- The higher the level of complexity the more we need simple, effective, targeted communication techniques and teamwork processes.

# Need for Standardization and Universality

- If everyone trains/practices in a different communication model, there will be difficulties in learning anew “language” with every clinical encounter, change in career or clinical rotation.
- A standardized method of communication such as that taught in TeamSTEPPS is critical
- A common UNIVERSAL language must be developed and promoted by professional organizations.

# Sustainability

- Baseline Education: the beginning BUT NOT ENOUGH
- Training Together: is IMPORTANT
- Leadership example and mentoring: KEY
- Coaching: Clinicians need to be taught in “real time” when and how to use newly learned communication skills and teamwork tools

# Coaching in “Real Time”

- In our experience, clinicians NEED to have a skilled teamwork and communication “Coach” work directly with the healthcare team, ***during the provision of real patient care following*** standardized training.
- Real time teamwork coaching allows for the introduction, reinforcement and correction of teamwork and communication skills and behaviors.

# Back in the ER...

- The teamwork “Coach” prompts the Charge Nurse and Lead Physician to gather the team for a quick “huddle”,
- “Coach” assists charge nurse in creating a briefing statement using an SBAR format.
- “Coach” reinforces the need for each team member to speak up briefly about what s/he can do to help; leaders act on these decisions. The “huddle” is completed in 3 minutes. The plan is modified and implementation begins. Key focus areas are 1) creating bed space for critical EMS patient; 2) addressing the waiting room.
- The “Coach” reminds the ER leaders to consult and update the status (white) board. This communication update takes 1 minute.
- “Coach” assists nurse and physician leaders to develop an SBAR statement to be made to the patients/families in the waiting room (S- critical patient enroute to the ED; B- already a full department; A- we are very sorry you are having to wait; R- if anyone has a change in their condition, please see the triage nurse right away or ask for one of us in the treatment area) This briefing takes 2 minutes.
- Bed in treatment area is cleared for EMS patient, 1 patient in the waiting room asks for re-evaluation, others are satisfied with attention, additional nurse is assigned to quickly review/re-assess waiting patients while triage nurse continues to screen new patients.
- NEXT TIME: The TEAM does it on their own WITHOUT COACHING!



# Summary

- Teamwork and communication skills should be simple, standardized, universal
- Skills should be practiced and redundant (in-situ simulation is an EXCELLENT method for this)
- Coaching in “real time” helps to reinforce and redirect good teamwork behaviors

