Peer Communication within the NICU

Can We Talk?
Goals of this session

• Be able to state the importance of effective peer communication
• Relate components of effective communication to situations in the NICU
• Understand barriers to communication
• Introduce Crew Resource Management concepts that increase effectiveness in medical communication
• Access communication components of Appreciative Inquiry to improve performance and morale in the NICU
Why examine peer communication?

- Poor peer communication leads to
  - Increased errors
  - Reduced competency and confidence
  - Unnecessary stress
  - Staff turnover
  - Increase absence from work
Root Causes of Sentinel Events

- Communication
- Orientation/training
- Patient assessment
- Staffing levels
- Availability of info
- Competency/credentialing
- Procedural compliance
- Physical environment
- Continuum of care
- Organization culture
- Alarm systems

(JCAHO - All categories 1995-2003)
Who are the peers in this regard?

- Doctors, residents, nurses, therapists, social workers, parent support…
  - They all speak the NICU dialect
  - They all have a role in patient care and safety
  - They have an intertwining role in the well being of fellow staff
  - They work within the same stressful environment, but their source of stressors may be different
  - They may all be called upon formally or informally to translate the NICU for families…
  - Desire for continuous learning and improvement, keen intellect, composure and diligence
Teams vs Groups

• A group of people working on a common problem is not always a team
  – Teams have defined roles with interdependency, high levels of communication and high mutual respect…

• Teams are more effective than individuals in achieving consistent high outcomes
  – Examples from industry abound, NASCAR pit crews, engineering design teams…

• Most examples of teams from industry are permanent teams
  – Medical teams are often “temporary teams” with a different mix depending on who is on call
  – Aviation provides a good model, high diligence and intellectual teams that routinely reshuffle

• Without good communication there is no team
How do we communicate

- Written
  - Flowsheet, electronic or paper* **
  - Orders
  - Notes in Med Record
  - Notes on the incubator or shelf

- Verbal
  - Rounds**
  - Report**
  - Conversations with staff*
  - Calls

- Video recordings

*denotes forms rated most useful by physicians in NICU (Brown et al, 2004)
**most favored in several nursing journal articles
Effective Communication in the NICU

General Principles
Be Clear and Concise

- Be clear on your goal or purpose for the communication
- Short and to the point
- Use clear language and reduce jargon
- Have agreement on standardized terms
- Can be done without any emotional tone, especially in tightly paced situations
  - Admissions, placing a line…
The benefits of clear and concise language

- Expedited pt care
- Enhanced decision making
- Reduced error
- Reduced stress through reduced ambiguity
- Increased sense of control
- Increased sense of competence
Be assertive

- If you see something unusual, especially if it fires up your clinical judgment radar
  - Get the attention of the appropriate staff member
  - State the concern in a timely fashion
  - Ask clarifying questions
- Avoid weak passive phrases
  - I feel, I’m sorry, kinda, like, sort of
- Avoid aggression
  - Barking, blaming, scapegoating
- Nurses are the most likely to be affected by this
  - Non-administrative hospital based nurses were rated by themselves and other in several studies to be less assertive than other team members
Benefits of assertive communication

- Reduce errors by as much as 60%
  - Would you rather have someone catch your mistake before it becomes a critical incident?
  - Simpson and Knox study of perinatal injuries/near misses found assertive communication was the key factor to maintain pt safety
    - Concern was expressed, the problem was stated but not clearly or directly
- Maintain ethical obligations, pt advocacy, Code of Ethics for Nurses
- Flattens hierarchy
  - Tangible sign of the value of all team members
- Team leaders who support assertive communication are consistently ranked as excellent team leaders
  - Increased feelings of member competence
Be Nice

- Have a positive emotional tone with others
- Notice positive performance
- Use people’s names in speaking with them
- Smile
- Have open body language
- In down time remember personal details and inquire
- A large part of CRM training is in interpersonal skills
- AI largely based on this principle
Why be nice?

- Conserves the basis of effective communication: mutual respect
- Maximizes the amount of information passed
  - If other team members can approach you without unpleasant interaction more information flows
- Keeps cognitive and emotional energy directed at tasks
  - Negativity diverts cognitive and emotional energy
“Communication is the ability of two or more team members to clearly and accurately send and receive information or instructions and provide useful feedback” (Powell and Hill, 2006)

Effective listening
– Avoid distractions and multi-tasking
– Body language (open body, head tilt and eye contact)
– Paraphrase or repeat
– Summarize at the end
Opportunity for informal talking

- The Hardy Personality
  - Control, Commitment, Challenge
  - For Intensive care nurses add Collegiality
- Important especially for staff to staff debriefing around severely stressful events
- In older style units it was easy for staff to have informal contact
- Large and SFR units must plan for this function
  - Group work space instead of solo stations
  - Avoid staff isolation
- In addition to emotional support, teaching and change management occurs
Barriers to effective communication

- External
  - Organizational culture
    - Collaborative or hierarchical – community?
    - Poorly or inaccurately defined roles
    - Common “team” scheduling in large units
  - Physical layout
    - Isolation or group space
    - Access to written or media based communication

- Internal
  - Personality
  - Level of communication skills
  - Emotional state
  - Lack of trust
Personality affect how you communicate under stress

- Think out loud with a group?
- Connect to those around you?
- Be creative?
- Pull back and think by yourself?
- Follow the rules?
- Take a break, use humor etc?
- Take control?
- Avoid conflict?

- If left to our innate tendencies for communication under stress we could increase stress.
Programs that focus on Communication

Crew Resource Management
Appreciative Inquiry
Crew Resource Management and Safety

- A Human Factors teamwork concept to combat medical error based on aerospace error reduction model – NASA 1979
- Errors in communication are one of the most common sources of critical incidents in medicine
- Studies from aviation showed that communication errors were at fault in the majority of aircraft critical incidents
  - By examining incidents and the traits of crew with high reliability they determined that non-technical skills were important
Non-technical skills of CRM

• Communication skills
  – Clear, concise, standardized briefing format, assertive

• Decision making
  – Algorithm, standards of practice, speed

• Interpersonal skills
  – Be nice, being assertive without being aggressive

• Crew coordination
  – Defined roles

• Effective leadership
  – Leaders drive organizational culture
  – Encourage collaboration
  – Open and decisive, neither weak nor a “screamer”
Example of CRM – Situational Briefing Model

- SBAR
  - A quick, but consistent briefing before every procedure
- Situation
- Background
- Assessment
- Recommendation
Simulations

- Like airlines, simulations are used to perfect communication in simulated clinical cases
- Expensive, but available at increasing numbers of academic centers
- Participants are scored on
  - SBAR
  - repeating information back accurately (listening)
  - call for help when appropriate (role definition)
  - clarity of requests, requests directed at another individual
  - double check data (multiple data source)
  - reports relevant information to the team
  - ensures team members needed are present
  - verifies team has correct information
CRM in medicine

- Reduce errors by 50+% in ED and OB studies
- Decrease ICU LOS
- Improve team satisfaction
- Reduce nurse turnover
• Identifying and celebrating the best performance of a team
  – By identifying the best performance can describe it as the model for performance
  – Involves public recording and cataloguing of best performance

• Builds on the niceness principle and moves beyond to energy, enthusiasm, joy and passion
  – Provides the energy to pursue excellence
Steps in the Appreciative Inquiry

• Moderated story telling in group setting
  – Tell me a story about what we are like when we are at our best – it can be about you or about a coworker

• Record stories (narratives) and distribute the transcript.

• From the transcript develop Provocative Statements
  – These statements provoke positive actions and attitudes

• Use the statements to dream and act upon vision
Story telling

• Gatherings to dialogue about examples of excellence in caring for families in the NICU
  – How moderator focuses on the positive
    • Redirection and expansion with moderator
  – Audience participation
    • Speaker asks for stories and gives demonstration of how to keep flow toward the positive.

• The emphasis is on narrative and emotional tone
What do you do with these statements?

• Provocative statements are used for training to the philosophy/culture of the unit

• They can be used in a positive light during annual reviews.
  – “Tell me a story of how you showed excellence in living up to these descriptions of us at our best.”

• Dream of changes that could be made to facilitate more of this kind of performance.
Results

- Increases habits of positive story telling
- In most studies improves morale and performance measures
  - Must have a strong moderator and strong team oriented environment to begin
- In UK study decrease in sick days by staff
- Flattens hierarchy
  - Experts are assumed to be on every level and in every role
  - Improves sense of competence, confidence and assertive behaviors
Summary

• Effective communication is important in reducing errors, team building, workplace morale and managing change positively
• Multiple styles of communication are needed to fulfill all the functions of communication within the NICU
• There are personal and organizational barriers to communication that must be solved or changed
• Programs that reduce medical errors or promote positive change rely heavily on improving communication
Glad to be in Florida?