

Communication with Patient/Clients

Statement of Best Practice

Communication between patients (and/or significant other) and a health care worker, takes place in a manner that respects their individuality

Introduction

Communication can be defined as:

'a process that involves a meaningful exchange between at least two people to convey facts, needs, opinions, thoughts, feelings or other information through both verbal and non-verbal means, including face-to-face exchanges and the written word' Essence of Care (2010)

Communication & Critical Care

Communication within the Critical Care environment can often be a challenging as patients are frequently sedated, out of their 'normal' surroundings, frightened or & apprehensive, intubated and unable to verbally communicate.

Assessment, Planning & Care Delivery

- A significant amount of communication is providing information, however healthcare professionals should develop a relationship with patients/clients to gain the level of understanding of the current issues.
- A comprehensive assessment of the patient should be undertaken and consideration if there are any additional, special or religious needs E.g. Language barriers, sign language.
- A full explanation of any procedure or care activity is given to the patient to ascertain informed consent providing, reassurance, maintaining privacy and dignity at all times.
- Repetition of the patient/clients response is a successful method to confirm understanding and provide reassurance to the patient.
- Use of verbal and non-verbal skills is essential.
- Use of communication aids /equipment should be considered E.g. alphabet or word boards/writing aids/speaking valves/electronic devices
- Use of appropriate eye contact with the patient is a very positive.
- Avoidance of medical jargon whenever possible and use of 'layperson' language should be used in the dialogue.
- A multi-professional team is used to support communication E.g. Medical staff, speech and language and physiotherapy.
- Information is available about the critical care unit (information booklets).

Education and Training

- All staff should have received appropriate communication skills education and training on the Trust Induction when they commence employment in the organisation.
- All staff should complete the Information Governance module as part of the mandatory training annual update. Eg. Record keeping, confidentiality.
- A clear record should be documented of all aspects of communication (healthcare records/diaries).

References

DH, (2010) Essence of Care Benchmarks for Communication. DH

Happ, M.B. et al. (2011) Nurse-Patient Communication interactions in the Intensive Care Unit. [American Journal of Critical Care](#) e28-e40

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Reader, T.W., Flin, R. and Cuthbertson, B.H. (2007) Communication skills and error in the intensive care unit. Current Opinion in Critical Care 13 p.732-736

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