

Communication, Stress Management, And Human factors

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ABSTRACT

The complex nature of hospital care , requires communication which not only accurately transfers factual clinical information, but also engenders cooperation, and motivation to maintain patient safety. Dysfunctional communication and behaviour in the hospital setting provides observable evidence of stress, and failure to achieve this goal.

While the incidence of severely disruptive behaviour is low (4-5%), the impact of this kind of behaviour can be immense, and costly (1), Human factors research classifies stress within Reason's latent errors. (2) He identifies latent errors as "resident pathogens" within the system that create an environment where active errors are more likely to proliferate. Communication problems and psychological precursors including stress, and motivation are among the list of possible causes of latent error.

Evidence from the psychology domain suggests that personality, needs and motivations may all play a role in the genesis of stress and its manifestations. (3). Negative communication behaviours, stress and motivation in healthcare are currently the subject of interest in relation to quality and safety following the findings of patient safety culture surveys. The relationships between these 'resident pathogens' has not been investigated. Negative behaviour in operating theatres and its impact on health outcomes, are the subject of a PhD research proposal with the University of Adelaide. An extensive literature search revealed that the most suitable tool to use for empirical research is Process Communication Model (PCM) (4) in which motivational needs, and stress behaviours are central and predictive capacity inherent.

A pilot study case will be presented, which clearly illustrates how this communication model was used to aid resolution in a situation where significant and real conflict, involving patient safety had arisen. Each protagonist was interviewed and asked to participate in role play of the conflict and complete personality profiles .The behaviours were analysed from video coding using Process Communication Model. Process Communication Model training was used as an intervention following standard intervention. The protagonists found the intervention of greater value than the standard intervention and cooperative behavioural change was evident. As a qualitative analysis of an intervention this case provides valuable information for the research, and has implications for addressing negative behaviours which are in conflict with quality and safety outcomes.

References

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