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Effective communication in operating room and patient safety

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN OPERATING ROOM AND PATIENT SAFETY

Patient safety is an important issue in health care settings. Operating rooms (OR) are one of the places that errors occur frequently. According to Joint Commission International (JCI) 805 sentinel events were detected in 2017.¹ Ineffective or insufficient communication among team members is a major contributing factor to adverse events in healthcare which is supported by relevant literature. Communication failures usually end up with harm to patients, staff and/or institution, besides increase length of stay in the hospital and ineffective resource use.^{2,3} Frequently reported incidents in OR are the ones related to communication and teamwork.⁴ According to JCI (2015) human factors, leadership and communication deficiencies are determined as common root causes for communication problems.⁵ It has been reported that there are several barriers to communication in OR; such as lack of time, any kind of noise in OR, high number of staff assigned for each case, interruptions, personality differences, not having standards for communication are only some of them.⁶ Types of communication have been used in OR's are verbal, nonverbal communication and paralanguage. Nonverbal communication skills such as gestures, body language, words chosen to transfer the knowledge, pitch and tone of the voice also play paramount of place in communication of health care staff. Understanding the communication from others' site, listening, emotional intelligence and conflict management are important skills in OR communication and should be used properly.⁷

Considerable numbers of wrong site surgeries found to occur because of ineffective communication in OR which is a serious patient safety issue.⁵ Operating rooms are the places where members of the OR team should work in coordination to promote safe patient care.⁸ All the surgical team members should work together to reach desired outcomes for patients' health and safety. Saxton (2012) reported that especially disruptive behaviors are threat to patient safety and a serious problem for the OR staff as well.⁹ OR nurses, particularly circulating nurses found to facilitate communication among surgical team members and play important role in success of the surgery.¹⁰

Minimizing errors, improving patient safety and satisfaction can be achieved by stabilizing effective communication in OR environment. WHO Surgery Safety Check(SSC) list is one of the methods in implementing effective communication among OR staff and promote patient safety during surgery.¹¹ Effective communication is highly valued interaction for high quality and safe patient care. Therefore, good communication should be learned by healthcare staff. Communication strategies should also be practiced and improved continuously.⁵ Learning and implementing effective communication requires training and practice. Training should include all the members of surgical team to achieve desired results in patient safety and improve communication among team members. Establishing team communication is not assigned to certain staff member it is responsibility of

the all health care team members in the OR. There are several ways to improve communication in OR staff.

These include;

- Determining communication failures
- Taking precautions and educating OR staff about the importance of effective communication
- Teaching outcomes of efficient communication on patient and staff
- Informing OR staff about basic communication skills, active listening, influence of poor communication on

both patients' and staff safety

- Teaching conflict management
- Standardizing communication
- Using evidence based tools and techniques (such as SBAR; I PASS the BATON etc).⁷⁻¹²

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