HANDOFF

Solution

What...

A handoff occurs when a patient, assignment, information, or task - and its associated responsibilities - are handed over to another person or work team.

Handoffs relay important information within and between our teams. Following a well-designed handoff protocol supports communication that is clear, concise, and complete.

In some organizations, handoffs are more commonly referred to as "handovers" or by an acronym or mnemonic such as IPASS, SBAR, or ISBARQ. As well, specific types of handoffs, such as beside shift report, may also be delineated.

Why...

Communication is the foundation of safe patient care and successful teamwork.

Communication failures are the leading cause of preventable medical errors and adverse events...... studies suggest that handoffs play a role in 80% of serious preventable adverse events.

When the information exchanged during a handoff is inaccurate, incomplete, or misinterpreted, there is a higher chance for errors and harm.

How...

Because we handoff every day, often many times a day - and they are risky and complex - it's important to understand and consistently practice well-designed handoffs to ensure that they are clear, concise, and complete.

Handoffs are improved by:

- ▶ Conducting face-to-face handoffs
- ▶ Including the patient and family, when possible (e.g., at the patient's bedside during handoffs at change of shift or caregiver)
- ▶ Using two-way communication to clarify understanding and ask questions
- ▶ Supplementing verbal reports with information from the electronic health record and/or written information
- ▶ Limiting interruptions and distractions

HANDOFF PROTOCOL

Organizations are encouraged to develop a formal handoff protocol or policy to create uniform standards for effective and efficient handoffs. All employees should know, and consistently use, the organization's specific handoff protocol in clinical and non-clinical situations.

A handoff protocol guides the delivery and receipt of accurate, up-to-date, and pertinent information often by using an acronym or mnemonic such as IPASS, SBAR, or ISBARQ (see below) which serve as a memory tool for presenting the information in a predictable and organized manner during each handoff.

- ▶ IPASS (Illness, Patient summary, Action list, Situation awareness and contingency planning, Synthesis by receiver)
- ▶ SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation)
- ▶ ISBARQ (Introduction, Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation, Questions).

NURSING BUNDLE

For nursing units, it is recommended that the handoff protocol be incorporated into the "nursing bundle," which is a collection of evidence-based practices that when used together lead to significant improvements in patient outcomes. An example of a recommended nursing bundle, which includes bedside shift report/handoff communication, is below:

1. Bedside shift report/handoff communication
2. Discharge/post-visit phone calls
3. Whiteboards
4. Purposeful (hourly) patient rounding
5. Teach back
6. Narrating

HANDOFFS IN NON-CLINICAL SITUATIONS

While often emphasized in clinical settings, adhering to a handoff protocol for handoffs of tasks or assignments within, or between, non-clinical departments, such as IT or maintenance, can also improve the quality of work, reduce errors, and increase satisfaction, teamwork, and productivity.

BARRIERS TO USE

A handoff protocol, in particular bedside shift report, are often met with resistance or barriers to use.

When creating or revising the handoff protocol, or planning the training or retraining on it, brainstorm and solicit the barriers to use.

This allows the common barriers (e.g., sleeping patients, HIPAA, time) to be addressed and managed during the development of the protocol and the training on it.

One of the most frequent barriers to using a handoff protocol is a lack of time. Fortunately, this can be addressed given the research that supports that bedside shift report saves times; and having the information we need also saves time in re-work or follow up from errors or mistakes.

> " *Invest time in using standardized handoff communication to save time (and lives!).* "