

Improving Teamwork for Better Patient Care with TeamSTEPPS®

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A New Approach to Error Prevention

If your Quality Improvement program needs an injection of vitality — a new approach to error prevention and a culture known for high reliability in quality and patient safety — consider a TeamSTEPPS intervention.

The program — Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS) — teaches professionals how to integrate teamwork principles into daily practice throughout the organization. It was designed to train

health care professionals who work in high stress areas — such as surgical suites, critical care, labor and delivery, and the ED — and throughout the hospital to create a culture of situational awareness, mutual support and a shared mental model. These program attributes take communication improvement all the way to culture change.

Developed by the Department of Defense Patient Safety Program and used in other high-risk industries, TeamSTEPPS is evidence-based and field tested by researchers, clinicians, medical educators and teamwork experts. It is scientifically rooted in team performance research, along with leading theoretical models for systems-based errors.¹

Training Highlights

TeamSTEPPS offers training in four core competency areas:

- **Team leadership**—the ability to direct and coordinate activities of team members, assess team performance, assign tasks, develop team knowledge and skills, motivate team members, plan and organize, and establish

a positive team atmosphere.

- **Situation monitoring (or mutual performance monitoring)**—the capacity to develop common understandings of the team environment, apply appropriate strategies to monitor teammate performance effectively and maintain a shared mental model.
- **Mutual support (or back-up behavior)**—the ability to anticipate other team members' needs and to shift workload to achieve balance during periods of high workload or pressure.
- **Communication**—ability to effectively and efficiently exchange information among team members across mediums.

The most powerful and valuable tools in the program are the short videos that depict teams functioning poorly before being equipped with TeamSTEPPS, and then teams in the same situation after, utilizing some of the program tools and strategies to improve communication and outcomes. When caregivers at various professional levels watch the before videos, they often see

themselves, realize how dysfunctional their team can be, and how easily that dysfunction sets the stage for medical errors. The strategies are easy to teach and easy to learn using the TeamSTEPPS Train-the-Trainer approach.

By training the trainer, a hospital or health system can prepare individuals to plan, teach and implement a TeamSTEPPS intervention in any organization. The approach aids in retention of the techniques and augments the community knowledge and skill level. The method also effectively flattens hierarchies and involves everyone — from the front line staff to organizational leaders — rendering processes transparent.

Notable Outcomes

TeamSTEPPS has a proven track record with a growing body of evidence that the method contributes to significant improvements in patient safety, clinical outcomes and cost:

- After implementing a pre-op brief at one organization, staff noted increased OR communication, fewer surgical errors, reduced nurse turnover and increased employee satisfaction.^{2,3}
- For another organization, there was a 50 percent reduction in the Weighted Adverse Outcome Score and a 50 percent reduction in the Severity Index.⁴

- The implementation of a Patient Daily Goals form to facilitate staff communication helped an intensive care unit (ICU) decrease mean ICU length of stay from 2.2 days to 1.1 days.⁵

After implementing SBAR (situation, background, assessment and recommendation/request) to improve communication among clinical caregivers, another organization:

- Reduced the rate of adverse drug events (from 30 to 18 per 1,000 patient days).⁶
- Improved medication reconciliation at patient admission from 72 percent to 88 percent and at discharge from 53 percent vs. 89 percent.⁶

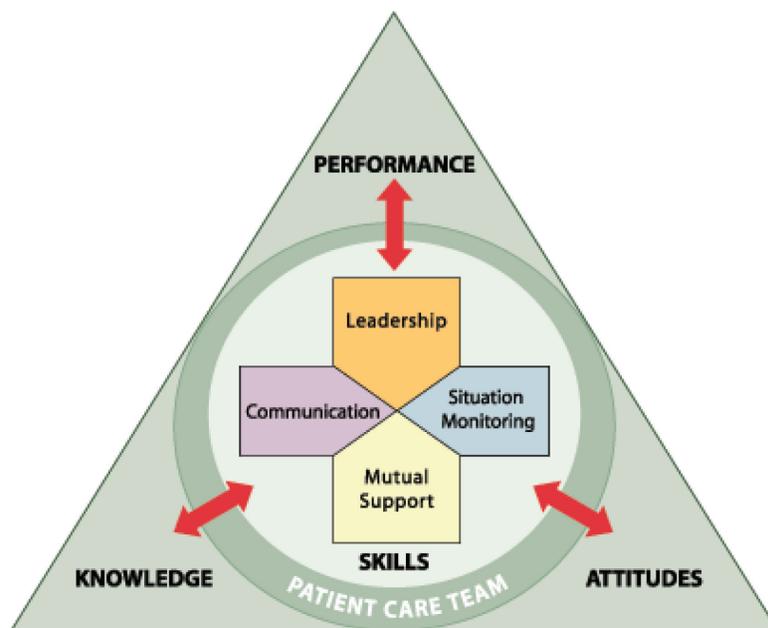
According to Dr. Abdul Mondul, Associate Chair of the Department of Medicine, Patient Safety Officer, Chief Palliative Care Services and Associate Director of GME at Lincoln Medical and Mental Health Center, there were significant

changes in how her team communicates:⁷

- Feedback on communication about errors improved from 72 percent to 82 percent in positive responses.
- Handoffs and transitions in this area improved from 56 percent to 69 percent.
- Teamwork and communication as perceived by staff improved from 67 to 79 percent and overall perception of safety improved from 72 to 86 percent.
- Compliance with the process of going through the three steps of surgical safety checklist is 100 percent.

HASC offers customizable consulting and training services led by Julia Slininger, RN, BS, HASC's VP Quality & Patient Safety and TeamSTEPPS Master Trainer. For more information, please contact her at (213) 538-0766 or jslininger@hasc.org.

Figure 1: TeamSTEPPS model



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