

June 3, 2022 Weekly Clinical Update

During the recent Quality Summit, I had the opportunity to attend an excellent session on “communication” around intentional huddling. When I have the opportunity to talk to staff members in facilities, most of them tell me the biggest problem they face in their job is “communication”. Why is that? We can’t seem to get it fixed. The session revolved around the value of intentional huddles. This subject came up at the last Nurse Advisory Committee meeting so I thought I would share my notes with you. Successful communication involves three components:

- People: people who know and understand the mission of your organization and want to care for residents in the best possible way
- Process: do you have processes set up for all staff in all departments that have meaning for caring for residents...do your processes support your staff by providing all staff members with the information and supplies they need to care for residents they want to provide?
- Culture: what is the culture in your center? Do your staff know the mission of your center? Do you promote true person-centered, person-directed care to your residents?

Are you using huddling as a communication technique? Using communication huddles is a good way to let frontline caregivers know how the work done helps residents. A huddle should have an agenda but not an overwhelming agenda...4 items at the most. The speaker emphasized that at the end of every huddle you should ask “Is there anything you need to do your job?” and “Do you have the information to do your job?” Then listen to the answers. Huddles will only be effective if the management team “buys in” to the communication technique. And that means huddling at convenient times for all shifts, all departments. You may want to start with monthly huddles and you may want to take turns for shifts, but you should be consistent in having the huddles. Plan the huddles at times and places that the staff tell you are best for them, but keep in mind, they should not take longer than 5-10 minutes, so don’t plan them in a place folks can sit/lie down and relax. The speaker held the facility huddles in a storage area. Those that should attend the huddles are all staff that are closest to the residents. Everyone’s knowledge and information is valuable! Management responsibility will be to follow up on the ideas presented by the staff...even if you don’t always agree. You have to trust your staff.

The presenter shared some of the facility’s failures in huddles. She said it will take 9 months to 2 years to get everyone on board. The failures that the facility experienced included:

- Trying to communicate too much information at a time
- DON was not on board so Administrator carried the load and the DON carries a lot of influence on the nursing staff
- The Administrator/management team didn’t listen to the staff ideas and suggestions
- Lacked an agenda
- Huddles lacked structure

The presenters suggested starting small: 5-10 minutes on every neighborhood and don’t forget all shifts. “See it BIG, keep it simple”.

I sure hope to see you all in Manhattan in a couple weeks for the Nurse Leadership Conference.