Chapter 4
Documentation and Communications

Learning Objectives

 Discuss the process of communication and skills you should use to interact with patients, other agencies, and responders
 Describe actions to take to increase the effectiveness of both verbal and nonverbal communications

Learning Objectives

 Discuss various barriers to effective communication and how to overcome those barriers
 Describe how to communicate with empathy
 Identify a variety of emergency communication equipment, their uses, and their limitations
Learning Objectives

- List information that is to be included when transferring patient care to another provider
- Discuss uses and critical nature of completing a quality patient care report (PCR)

Learning Objectives

- Discuss the absolute need for confidentiality and privacy of patient health information
- List information required (minimum data set) to be included in each patient care report

Introduction

- Nothing is more important to the success of an EFT as clear, concise, appropriate communication
  - Consider all communication that must take place to make the proper response happen
  - A single breakdown can have far-reaching effects
  - Effective communication is the cornerstone to an organized, safe, successful emergency response
There are many different definitions of the word “communication.” We will look at it in the following light:

- Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states
- This definition is the foundation of this chapter

Many different definitions of the word “communication”

- Everything you do, say, your tone of voice, your posture, and your appearance communicates a message to your patient
- Every communication event starts with a sender, receiver, and message
Communication

- Importance of effective communication
  - Interagency and intraagency communication
    - Must be clear communication within each agency
    - You cannot expect to effectively communicate with other agencies if you cannot communicate within your own
  - Before age of interoperability
    - Different agencies may have had different names for the same piece of equipment
  - Focus in today's emergency response environment; "using plain English" to avoid confusion

Communication

- Importance of effective communication
  - Patient communication
    - Once you get to the scene of the emergency and gather necessary resources, it is time to communicate with the patient
      - As an EFR, you will be present at what may be the worst moments in your patient's life

Communication

- Effective communication
  - To improve your ability to better understand verbal and nonverbal messages you receive, approach each patient encounter with empathy
Communication

- Effective communication
  - Empathy
    - The ability to recognize, perceive, and feel directly the emotions of another
    - Begins with awareness of another person’s feelings
    - It is easier to be aware of other people’s emotions if they would tell us how they feel

Communication

- Effective communication
  - Empathy
    - We can also show empathy through a simple sign of affection such as a gesture or a comforting touch
    - Be careful and sensitive to cultural differences in which a touch may be viewed as inappropriate or unacceptable
    - Usually used in reference to sensing someone else’s painful feelings
    - It can also apply to someone’s positive feelings of success, pride, or achievement

Communication

- Effective communication
  - Sensitivity
    - As an EFR, you are expected to bring your sensitivity for the human condition to each and every call
    - Basic guideline for showing sensitivity to someone is to not invalidate him/her
Communication

- Effective communication
  - Sensitivity
    - Involves being receptive to others cues
    - Sensitivity and empathy are connected at the hip
    - Being sensitive, acting and speaking with empathy gives you the best chance of connecting with your patients and building a bond of trust
  - Listening
    - Hearing and listening are different
      - Hearing is the physical component, which requires an environment conducive to conversation
      - Listening: process by which you understand not only what was said but also how it was said and associated body language
    - Components that affect listening:
      - Use encouraging behavior
      - When speaking, face the other person
      - Make eye contact
      - Pay attention to the nonverbal clues
Communication

- Effective communication
  - Listening
    - Components that affect listening:
      - Occasionally nod your head, smile, or even raise your eyebrows while listening
      - Give your full attention
      - Try not to interrupt while other person is talking
      - Summarize

- Effective communication
  - Nonverbal communication
    - Your tone of voice and body language can be more important than the actual words spoken
    - If we do not pay attention to nonverbal communications we see and emit, we are missing a huge portion of the intended message

- Effective communication
  - Nonverbal communication
    - Body position
      - Goal of communication in an emergency response is to create a bond of trust to accurately assess and treat your patient
Communication

- Initial patient contact
  - As you approach, be aware of surroundings by scanning for potential hazards or danger and a route of egress
  - Greet your patient, introduce yourself
  - Ask the patient’s name
  - Ask, “How may I help you today” or “What can I do for you today”

Communication

- Barriers to effective communication
  - Language
  - Visual impairment
  - Hearing impairment

Communication

- Barriers to effective communication
  - Barriers specific to emergency response
    - Any emergency scene is brimming with distractions:
      - Semi and cars speeding by you as you work
      - Smells coming from someone’s residence
      - Noise
      - Weather
      - Traffic
Communication

- Barriers to effective communication
  - Barriers specific to emergency response
    - Any emergency scene is brimming with distractions:
      - Unbelievable stories
      - Profound sadness
      - People watching
      - Poor radio reception
      - Low batteries on cell phone
      - Being on correct frequency or radio system

Emergency Communications

- Think about what happens to your body physiologically when you are on an emergency call
  - Heart rate increases
  - Blood pressure increases
  - Respiratory rate increases
  - Your adrenaline is flowing and things are happening faster than usual

Emergency Communications

- Communication between emergency vehicles is necessary, but may not always be simple
  - On the way to an emergency call, sirens and horns are blaring, crew members may be trying to talk over the noise
  - You need to be able to hear if dispatch changes the address or indication that the scene is unsafe
Emergency Communications

- Emergency first responder patient hand-off report
  - After gathering patient information and then assessing, treating the patient, it is time to transfer care to a transporting agency.
  - The transporting agency may not have the opportunity to view the same scene as you did.

Emergency Communications

- Communications systems
  - For all of your communication efforts to be effectively transmitted and received, you need to have a functional communication system/network.
  - FCC.

Emergency Communications

- Communications systems
  - Base stations
  - Mobile radios
  - Portable radios
  - Cellular phones
Emergency Communications

- Tips for difficult communications
  - Be honest
  - Speak slowly and clearly
  - Watch your body language
  - Check your own emotions and gather yourself before speaking
  - If you have to deliver bad news or ask private/difficult questions, find an appropriate setting

Emergency Communications

- Tips for pediatric communications
  - Get down to the child’s level
  - Keep parent, guardian, relative, or friend with child
  - Try to keep somewhat up to date on pop culture and what kids are into
  - A crying child is telling you he has an open airway, he is breathing, and he has a pulse
Documentation

- It is difficult to overemphasize the absolute importance of complete and accurate documentation
  - After every emergency response, there must be a written record of what occurred

Documentation

- Minimum data set
  - In every PCR, there are certain required pieces of information
    - Data are collected from patient information and administrative information
    - Knowing the importance of such data ensures accurate completion of both patient and administrative data

Documentation

- Confidentiality and privacy
  - Any information contained in the PCR is considered protected
    - Information cannot be shared or released except to those persons directly involved in the patient’s medical care
Documentation

- Tips for better documentation
  - Write report immediately after response
  - Find a style that works for you, stick with it
  - Be careful not to use slang/jargon
  - Use only approved abbreviations
  - If using computer-based charting, use the “spell check” feature
  - Write your chart well enough so that you can easily recall the incident just by reading through it

Questions?