Managing Disruptive Behavior is a Foundation for Teamwork
WEDNESDAY, July 9, 2008

“Intimidating and disruptive behaviors can . . .

foster medical errors, contribute to poor patient satisfaction and preventable adverse outcomes,

increase the cost of care, and cause qualified clinicians, administrators and managers to seek new positions in more professional environments.

Safety and quality of patient care is dependent on teamwork, communication, and a collaborative work environment.

To assure quality and to promote a culture of safety, health care organizations must address the problem of behaviors that threaten the performance of the health care team.”

http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea_40.htm
Definition of Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior is any inappropriate behavior, confrontation, or conflict, ranging from verbal abuse to physical or sexual harassment. Disruptive behavior causes strong psychological and emotional feelings, which can adversely affect patient care.

Example of Disruptive Behavior from AHRQ HSOPS

“A lot depends on who you work with. Communication is poor. You walk on egg shells whenever you go to work. I think everyone should have to work all shifts and maybe they wouldn't cut down the ones that work all shifts.”
Change the Frame of Reference

- **Disruptive Behavior: Old frame of reference**
  - Tolerate the behavior as a way of doing business
  - Shrug off problem; minor occurrence, no ill effects to patients or staff

- **Disruptive Behavior: New frame of reference**
  - Disruptive behaviors have profound effect on safety and quality
  - Not unique to physicians or healthcare
  - Consequences permeate the organization
    - Affect staff morale, patient and family
    - Community perceptions and hospital reputation
  - Hospitals can no longer take a passive approach to disruptive behaviors

Strategy to Address Disruptive Behavior

- Raise awareness – conduct survey of staff relations
- Develop policies/procedures
  - Code of behavior
  - Confidential reporting system
  - Enforcement—interdisciplinary staff relations committee
  - Follow-up and feedback to reporters and all staff
- Education
  - Link behavior to adverse events
  - Communication and teamwork using TeamSTEPPS tools

Survey of Staff Relations
(n = 69)

POSITIVE Communication is somewhat effective and contributes to an acceptable level of staff morale. Advocacy and assertion for patients is accepted but not frequent. Disruptive behavior is rare, not reported, and ignored. 46%

NEGATIVE Ineffective communication contributes to low staff morale. Advocacy and assertion for patients is rare. Disruptive behavior is frequent and accepted. 19%

NEUTRAL Communication is neither exceptionally effective nor exceptionally negative. Advocacy and assertion for patients is infrequent. Disruptive behavior is infrequent, not reported, and ignored. 26%

POSITIVE/NEUTRAL 9%
Number of Individuals Reporting the Frequency of Types of Disruptive Behavior

(n = 69)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Disruptive Behavior</th>
<th>Number of Individuals</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Anger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yelling/Raising Voice</td>
<td>Never: 6, Rarely (1x/year): 9, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 24, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Insults</td>
<td>Never: 6, Rarely (1x/year): 18, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 24, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Condescension</td>
<td>Never: 4, Rarely (1x/year): 14, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 24, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berating patients</td>
<td>Never: 7, Rarely (1x/year): 11, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 22, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berating Colleagues</td>
<td>Never: 4, Rarely (1x/year): 16, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 18, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abusive Language</td>
<td>Never: 9, Rarely (1x/year): 15, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 19, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disrespectful</td>
<td>Never: 2, Rarely (1x/year): 10, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 26, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yelling/Raising Voice</td>
<td>Never: 7, Rarely (1x/year): 14, Sometimes (2 - 3x/year): 20, Frequently (more than 3x/year): 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Triggers</td>
<td>Never</td>
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<td>Requests for task assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication btw different generations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication btw genders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vertical Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Horizontal Communications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Availability of Equip. &amp; Supplies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheduling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
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Lesson Learned

Individuals operate within teams. To function effectively in a team, each individual must be valued and treated with respect by implementing a

- Code of behavior
- Confidential reporting system
- Enforcement—interdisciplinary staff relations committee
- Follow-up and feedback to reporters and all staff
Lesson Learned

INFORMED = SAFE = HRO

LEARNING

FLEXIBLE

JUST

REPORTING

TEAMSTEPPS

Individuals feel valued
Individuals are treated with respect
Contact Information

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Web site where safety culture tools are posted

www.unmc.edu/rural/patient-safety