

Background

While access to Universal Healthcare is an important and hotly debated topic, access to effective communication within health care settings is also a critically important issue.

Without effective communication between patients, families and providers, truly adequate healthcare cannot be achieved (Blackstone, 2009). Individuals who have difficulty communicating are especially vulnerable in hospital settings where poor communication can lead to unnecessary pain, confusion, medication errors, and even premature death (Barlett, G. et al., 2008).

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Sentinel Events Data 1995-2005

QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

Joint Commission Standards

In light of this ongoing concern The Joint Commission has instituted a new standard on Effective Patient Communication that went into effect on January 1, 2011 (www.jointcommission.org). This Standard with its focus on improving communication, presents a unique opportunity for SLPs to provide critical support across hospital settings.

The following guidelines from the Joint Commission illustrate the point:

- **Identify the appropriate AAC resources to meet patient needs by incorporating referrals to communication impairment specialists, including speech-language pathologists and audiologists, into patient care.**
- **Offer a mix of auxiliary aids and services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**
- **Incorporate information about auxiliary aids and services information and AAC resources into new or existing hospital policies and procedures.**
- **Train staff on how to access and work with auxiliary aids and services and AAC resources**

Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care

A Roadmap for Hospitals

Identify Resources

The Patient-Provider Communication Website <http://www.patientprovidercommunication.org/>

The Patient Provider Communication (PCC) Website and Forum is a national and international effort to promote information sharing, cooperation and collaboration among individuals who are committed to seeking improvements in patient-provider communication across the entire health care continuum--from a doctor's office, emergency room, clinic, ICU, acute care and rehabilitation hospital, home health service and hospice.

Resources and links for:

- Sample communication boards and materials
- First Responder Tips
- Case Studies with solutions for Patient Provider breakdowns
- Inservice and Presentation resources

EZBoard™ Vidatak <http://www.vidatak.com/>

Communication Board For First Responders in Multiple Languages

Low Tech and Lite Tech Options

Pocket Talker
Chattervox (voice amplifier)
White Board
Page Magnifier

Eye Gaze Board
Go-Talk 20+
Letter Board/Fusion
Talking Photo Album

On The Spot Healthcare Toolkit

Developed by two Speech-Language Pathologists at Boulder Community Hospital, the On The Spot Toolkit is designed to be located on a nursing unit for quick and easy access for all medical staff. It includes various simple to use tools designed to make communication easier for the general communication vulnerable patients (patients who typically aren't referred for a speech consult, but have hearing, vision, ESL, call bell access and/or speech issues of a temporary nature (intubation, etc.). There is a "how to" guide, and everything is labeled for infection control and restocking purposes.

On The Spot Tool Kits

Boulder Community Hospital
Juli Pearson MS, CCC-SLP

AAC Tech Connect <http://www.aactechconnect.com/onthespot.cfm>

How To Get Started (Blackstone, et. al. 2011)

- 1) **Become familiar with the new Joint Commission Standards** and the accompanying Roadmap: search phrase "patient-centered communication".
- 2) **Talk with your medical colleagues** and establish collaborative relationships with nurses, sign language interpreters, translators, and health care staff involved in implementing the new standards.
- 3) **Meet with hospital administrators and compliance officers**, to explain/reinforce the unique role that SLPs and audiologists bring to the table.

How to Get Started

- 4) **Develop communication materials**, brochures, and consent forms that use simple text, large print, and picture symbols. Offer to adapt communication techniques for patients with a variety of communication, language, cultural, and literacy challenges. Examples found at www.patientprovidercommunication.org.
- 5) **Establish a budget for purchasing equipment** that hospitalized patients may borrow (Lite Tech Options, On the Spot Communication Toolkit)
- 6) **Identify, modify, and/or develop continuing education** or in-service modules for staff on how to use improve patient provider communication and utilize available options.
- 7) **Share your materials and successes with others. Consider joining the PPC Forum!**

References

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