



# Utilizing TeamSTEPPS to Improve Communication in Long Term Care Settings

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Doctor of Nursing Practice Project

## Background

- ❖ In healthcare, ineffective communication contributes to medical errors, sentinel events, fatalities, and billions in malpractice cost.
- ❖ In long term care, ineffective communication and poor teamwork place older adults at risk for adverse events, such as hospitalizations, injuries, and death.
- ❖ Effective communication and teamwork are key components to providing safe patient care and nurses have a leading role in communicating patient information.
- ❖ Implementing a standardized handoff tool and team building curriculum, can improve communication and teamwork among nurses.

## Local Problem

Ineffective communication was observed and verbalized as a practice problem at a long term care facility in a suburban location of Maryland.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Doctor of Nursing Practice quality improvement project was to implement and evaluate the TeamSTEPPS curriculum with a standardized handoff tool to improve communication and teamwork between nurses at a long term care facility.

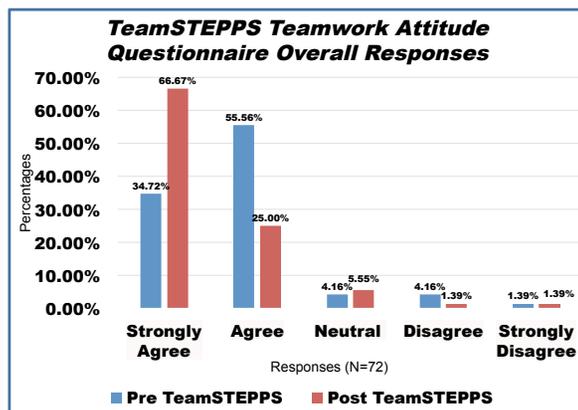
## TeamSTEPPS Interventions

Six nurses at a suburban long term care facility learned two TeamSTEPPS modules: communication and team structure. Modules included strategies such as Situation-Background-Assessment-Recommendation framework and used a validated handoff tool, Safer Sign Out. This quality improvement project occurred over 14 weeks and Lippitt's Change Theory was used to guide this practice change.

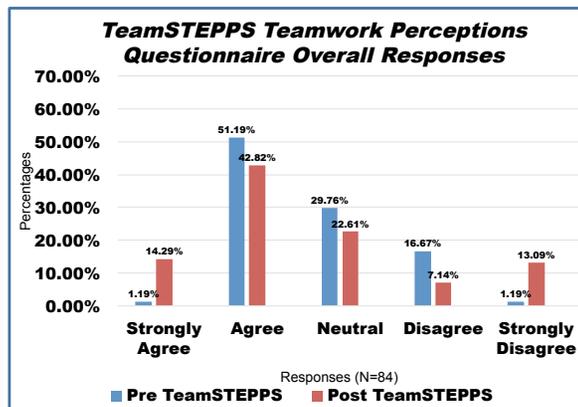
- ❖ Week one: Nurses were informed about the practice change.
- ❖ Week two: The DNP project leader administered pre surveys and educated the nurses on the TeamSTEPPS's curriculum and handoff tool.
- ❖ Weeks three – thirteen: Nurses utilized the handoff tool to give shift report. Nurses were observed during the first week of implementation. Compliance was assessed and feedback was given.
- ❖ Week fourteen: Nurses completed post surveys.

## Results

- ❖ The post TeamSTEPPS Teamwork Attitudes Questionnaire revealed an increase in overall scores on the team structure and communication category, but were not statistically significant.



- ❖ The post TeamSTEPPS Teamwork Perceptions Questionnaire, team structure category revealed a slight increase in the overall scores from the team structure category and a slight decrease within the communication category; however, neither were found to be statistically significant.



## Discussion

- ❖ TeamSTEPPS did not show statistically significant improvements in the nurses' attitudes and perceptions on teamwork and communication.

## Facilitators

Rapport with nurses and the facility  
Leadership buy-in  
Leaders participated in practice change

## Barriers

Small sample size  
Lack of an organizational champion  
Limited space to free text information on handoff tool  
Utilization of two handoff tools for report  
Resistance to change  
Response bias (social desirability)  
Multiple organizational changes occurring simultaneously

## Conclusions

- ❖ Ineffective communication and poor teamwork in long term care continues to lead to adverse events. Information is often lost during shift handoff.
- ❖ Several limitations may have impacted the results: a small sample size, a lack of an organizational champion, limited space to free text information on handoff tool, resistance to change, response bias, and organizational changes.
- ❖ If barriers are addressed, utilizing the TeamSTEPPS curriculum with nurses to teach teamwork and communication strategies, along with a validated handoff tool may help improve communication during shift handoff.

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For the full list of references, questions or comments, please contact author Airelle Rucker (arucker@umaryland.edu).