

Introduction

SBAR is an easy to use, structured form of communication that enables information to be transferred accurately between individuals. SBAR was originally developed by the United States military for communication on nuclear submarines, but has been successfully used in many different healthcare settings, particularly relating to improving patient safety.

SBAR consists of standardised prompt questions in four sections to ensure that staff are sharing concise and focused information. It allows staff to communicate assertively and effectively, reducing the need for repetition and the likelihood for errors. As the structure is shared, it also helps staff anticipate the information needed by colleagues and encourages assessment skills. Using SBAR prompts staff to formulate information with the right level of detail.

Next Steps

Once you have started using SBAR as a communication tool, you need to monitor the progress – how well it is being used and whether communication is improved. If it is proving successful, the next step is to embed the tool into people's everyday habits, so that it becomes 'the way things are done around here'. Ideas for helping the more widespread use of SBAR include:

- using prompts and visual cues – eg stickers on the telephone, letter templates and patient notes
- ensuring people feel it's alright to prompt each other using your agreed framework. For example, 'Can I make sure I understand you? What is your recommendation here?'
- make time for team discussion, reflection and refinement of the tool
- disseminate your good practice to other teams by modeling the communication behaviour you are aiming for.

Situation:

I am (name), (X) nurse on ward (X)
 I am calling about (patient X)
 I am calling because I am concerned that...
 (e.g. BP is low/high, pulse is XX, temperature is XX, Early Warning Score is XX)

SBAR



Background:

Patient (X) was admitted on (XX date) with...
 (e.g. MI/chest infection)
 They have had (X operation/procedure/investigation)
 Patient (X)'s condition has changed in the last (XX mins)
 Their last set of obs were (XX)
 Patient (X)'s normal condition is...
 (e.g. alert/drowsy/confused, pain free)

Assessment:

I think the problem is (XXX)
 And I have...
 (e.g. given O2/analgesia, stopped the infusion)
 OR
 I am not sure what the problem is but patient (X) is deteriorating
 OR
 I don't know what's wrong but I am really worried

Recommendation:

I need you to...
 Come to see the patient in the next (XX mins)
 AND
 Is there anything I need to do in the mean time?
 (e.g. stop the fluid/repeat the obs)