When Professions Meet: Bridging the Gap between Laboratory and Nursing

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Many healthcare professions view situations differently, while the main objective is identical:

Providing the best patient care possible!
Objectives

• Identify different models for learning by the laboratory and nursing professions

• Identify barriers to communications between the two professions

• Explore strategies to build strong positive relationships between laboratory and nursing staff
Laboratory Profession

- The medical diagnosis
- Education from/about scientific findings
- The scientist (research)
The Premise the Professions Work From

Nursing Profession

• The patient care plan
• Education of patient and family
• The eyes and ears of the physician
Why did you choose the Laboratory Profession?
Commonalities in Both Professions

- Desire to help others
- Job availability
- Love of science
- Challenge
- Personal/Professional goals
Laboratory Profession

• Prefer less patient contact

• Distant Interaction with physicians

• Deal with patient testing, often specific testing

• Want to help physicians find answers to diagnosis and treat patients
Nursing Profession

- Want patient contact
- Interact with physicians closely
- Like to treat patients as a whole
- Enjoy interaction with family and making a difference in patient care
The Technologist’s Viewpoint

- To provide the most accurate test possible
- To help the physician diagnose and/or treat the patient
- To provide the best patient care through laboratory testing
The Nurse’s Viewpoint

• Provide the best care for the patient so they may return to a functional daily activities of living

• Do everything possible to help the patient get well before discharge

• Prevent a relapse or re-admission through patient care and education
The Laboratory Approach to Situations

- Little or no flexibility in testing
- Must follow SOP’s exactly
- Mostly science less “art”
- Highly regulated
- Critical thinking- less creative
The Nursing Approach to Situations

- Flexibility to change the order of steps in patient care
- Follows SOP’s but may sometimes re-arrange order
- As much “art” as science
- Can be less regulated
- Can be creative and abstract in approach
Understanding between professions during crisis

- Accurate and clear communication
- Have all the facts
- Get to the point
- If you don’t know an answer, ask someone who does
- **THE PATIENT** is always at “center stage”
Cohesive Patient Care

- Physicians
- Lab
- Nursing
- Respiratory
- Administration
- Housekeepers
- Facilities
- Radiology
Removal of One Piece of the Wheel

- Physicians
- Lab
- Nursing
- Respiratory
- Administration
- Housekeepers
- Radiology
Fragmented Patient Care
What can YOU do when get tense?

• Be patient and calm in all situations

• Be courteous and professional

• Take a moment in the situation to put yourself in the other person’s shoes

• If the other person is unreasonable, ask to speak to someone who is reasonable
Suggestions for Bridging the Gap

- Shadow the other profession
- Read about the profession: their roles, jobs and education
- Sit with other departments during lunch, breaks, meetings or in-service education
- Invite the other profession members to your department
Suggestions Continued….  

• Set up exchange programs between Laboratory Staff and Nursing Staff

• Share education ideas

• Let the other profession have your ear
Suggestions continued….

- Develop Trust among nursing leadership
  Find out when they meet..ask to attend their meeting for 5 minutes once a month.

- Educate, Educate, Educate…When consulted to verify regulations, practice, interpretation of laboratory values…ask to present to the nursing staff or to their nurse educators.
Suggestions Continued....

• Make your expectations and concerns known to the nursing upper management. Develop a working relationship between departments

• Round with the nursing units

• Manage Up

• Reward and Recognition
More Suggestions

• Educate others regarding the laboratory profession

• Share best practices….don’t RE-invent the wheel

• Get involved
Rounding Tool ideas:

Always ask:

Is my department meeting your needs?

Are my staff/students friendly when they converse or interact with your staff?

How can we assist you with your needs from the laboratory?
Patient Care Unit (PCU) Rounding Log

Date: __________  PCU: _______________  Staff Interviewed: _______________

Is my department(s) taking care of your patient’s needs?

Are there any recent issues that may have occurred with our department’s interactions? ____________________________________________________________

Is there anything we can do better for your area?

Is our communication satisfactory or are there needed improvements?

Thank you for your time:

Please return to: Kelly- Supervisor of clinical laboratory
Managing Up:

• When the laboratory staff compliments the nursing staff…Let the nurse manager of that employee know about it.

• If you do patient audits and the patient complains about nursing staff…manage up that nursing unit, if appropriate.
Patient Rounding Log

Date: __________  Floor and Room/Bed: _______________  ID: ________

Did the phlebotomist(s) that drew your blood today introduce themselves? ______

Do you remember their name? ________________________________

How did they do? And why? ________________________________

Is there anything that we can do better? ______________________

Thank the patient for their time.

Please return to Beth. Thank you!
Managing Up:

• When the nursing staff compliments your staff…Let your employee(s) know about, preferably in front of their peers.

• Send thank you notes to nursing staff when they catch a deviation in SOP from your department
Collect and Share the Data...

- It’s all about proof.. Turn-around-times being questioned?
- Present findings at a joint session
- Work jointly on quality team
Continued…

• Become a valuable resource… once you earn credibility with the other profession, you will be viewed as the resource in your area.

• Work to become the consultant.

• Keep current on what is happening in your institution.
• Reward the other profession for wins

• Reward your staff/students when they work well with other departments.