
Paediatric Communication Improves with Family Input



Poor communication between medical teams and families can lead to errors and poor-quality care. New research has demonstrated that a multidisciplinary improvement team involving a family advisor can be effective in helping improve communication between care teams and families in paediatric intensive care units (PICUs).

"Including a family advisor as an equal member of an improvement team provides family empowerment and a greater chance of success in complex areas," according to Laura Czulada, DO, Stony Brook Children's Hospital, Stony Brook, N.Y., and co-authors. Their study, "Partnering With a Family Advisor to Improve Communication in a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit", is published in the American Journal of Medical Quality.

The investigators aimed to understand why communication between the clinical team and families was not occurring consistently in the PICU. They observed updates and collected documented communication, survey, interview, and focus group data from families and medical staff. The research team identified these major causes of failures: lack of assigned responsibility, lack of defined daily update, and lack of a daily communication standard.

The team designed an improvement project based on Lean Six Sigma -- ie, combining two quality-improvement approaches: Lean and Six Sigma. Lean methodologies aim to eliminate waste and streamline processes. Six Sigma projects involve increasing quality and yield, while reducing defects and variation. Lean Six Sigma projects often boost the bottom line while improving care and reducing the chance of patient safety errors. In addition, Lean Sigma projects promote sustainable, long-lasting improvement by setting up measurement systems and then consistently tracking and feeding back performance.

The research team implemented process changes in the PICU, resulting in an increased mean documented communication rate from 13 percent before intervention to 65 percent after intervention that was sustained for more than two years ($P < .001$).

Source: [American College of Medical Quality](#)
Image credit: Stony Brook Children's Hospital

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