

UNDERSTANDING CLINICAL COMMUNICATION

Saif Khairat (Doctoral Candidate)

(Yang Gong, MD, PhD)

School of Medicine, Department of Health Management and Informatics,
MU Informatics Institute

Introduction: Clinical Communication failures are considered the leading cause of medical errors¹. Minimizing communication problems among clinical team members could directly reduce medical errors and hence, increase patient safety and improve health care services.

In this research, we define communication as the exchange of ideas, messages or knowledge between two or more entities through oral and written forms, and signals. Our aim is to explore the patterns of how and why these communication problems occur through knowledge acquisition from reported incidents.

Methods: In order to comprehend the impact of communication within health care, a comprehensive and inclusive framework of clinical communication is used to help delineate the overall picture. Figure 1, shows the upper level taxonomy schema that Gong and his colleagues constructed with 9 major axes³.

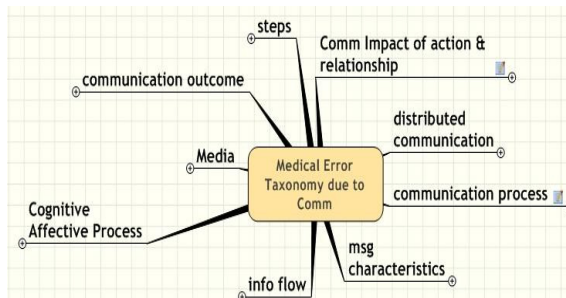


Figure 1

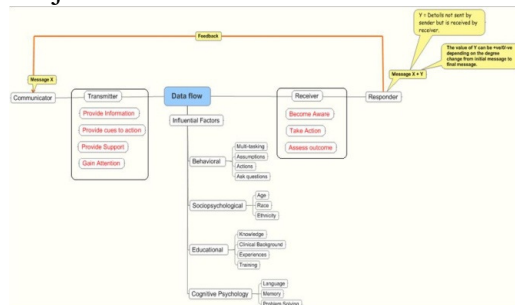


Figure 2

Figure 2 shows the communication model we propose to represent clinical communication. To better investigate communication issues, we collect reported medical incident, cases from two main sources: (1) case reports retrieved from literature database, newspapers and lawsuits; (2) research papers that discussed medical errors in health care.

Conclusion: This ongoing project aims at a fully developed communication ontology which would help healthcare professional understand medical incidents and increase their awareness of effective communication.

References

1. Bates, D.W., et al., The Costs of Adverse Drug Events in Hospitalized Patients. JAMA January 22/29, 1997; 277 (4):307-311.
2. Gong, Y., et al., Clinical communication ontology for medical errors. Studies in Health Technology & Informatics, 2007. 129(Pt 2): p. 1007-11