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- Identify patients at risk for suicide.
- Conduct a risk assessment that identifies specific patient characteristics and environmental features that may increase or decrease the risk for suicide.
- Address the patient's immediate safety needs and the most appropriate setting for treatment.
- When a patient at risk for suicide leaves the care of the hospital, provide suicide prevention information (such as a crisis hotline) to the patient and his or her family.

*What other ways, if any, are the previous patient details relevant to communication?*

**Did communication impact the patient's care?**

Yes, based on the information presented in the case study, it does appear communication, or more specifically ineffective communication, impacted the patient's care. Essentially, ineffective communication leads to potential medical errors, which, ultimately, negatively impacted the patient's care.

*How can health care professionals work to prevent/limit medical errors related to ineffective communication?*

**How could patient outcomes differ if effective communication was used in the patient's care?**

The patient's experience in the health care facility could have been very different if effective communication was used in his care (i.e., patient outcomes may have been different). An example of how the patient's care and related outcomes could have been different may be found below:

Effective communication was used in the patient's care - the patient is admitted into the health care facility; a health care professional conducts a medication reconciliation to determine what medications the patient is currently taking; the medication reconciliation reveals the patient is on several medications including warfarin 5 mg daily; warfarin 5 mg daily as well as the patient's other medications are ordered for the patient; an initial INR is ordered for the patient as well as subsequent INR levels to adequately monitor the patient; during the medication reconciliation the patient reports that he has an NSAID allergy; the patient's NSAID allergy is immediately documented by a health care professional; twenty-four hours after the

patient is transferred to his room, he reports he is in pain; a Wong/Baker faces rating scale is used to determine the patient's intensity or level of pain; due to the patient's identified intensity/level of pain, health care professionals would like to order pain medications for the patient, including ibuprofen; a health care professional reviews patient-related documentation and identifies the patient's NSAID allergy; ibuprofen is not included the patient's pain medication orders; the patient's pain is adequately treated; the patient's INR levels remain in the indicated therapeutic range (i.e., between 2 - 3); eventually, the patient becomes comfortable in his new environment and with the individual members of his health care team; health care professionals engage in two-way communication with the patient to review and determine courses of therapy; health care professionals actively listen to the patient; the patient provides feedback regarding his therapy and health care professionals make adjustments to his care; the patient's health, overall well-being and quality of life steadily improve; the health care professionals, and more importantly, the patient, are pleased with the health care outcomes thus far.

*What is another example of how the patient's care/related outcomes could have been different if effective communication was used?*

## Conclusion

Communication is an essential element of health care, and effective communication can be used to promote safe and effective health care, reduce medical errors, and optimize patient care. Thus, health care professionals should work to improve communication within their health care organizations. Health care professionals can improve communication within their health care organization by incorporating the following four key strategies or action points into their daily practice: obtain and utilize insight into communication; adhere to and follow health care communication-related laws and guidelines; effectively utilize health care communication-related tools; follow related recommendations.

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