

Creating Healthy Work Environments 2019

The Role of Cultural Synergy, Change, and Communication in Achieving Success in Patient Flow Processes

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Healthcare organizations are dynamic; from the changes in healthcare policy to the face of the communities that they serve, and, most importantly, the organizational makeup of its employees. Synergy, in its simplest definition, is “where members’ potential for learning and adaptation of the collective group’s ideas are channeled to create a solution to team and/organizational system problems” (Harris, 2004, p.359). Harris (2004) further outlines how synergy is effective in international projects in that “...leaders who promote cultural synergy influence social change in human behavior and improve system effectiveness” (p. 362). The concept of cultural synergy can be easily generalizable to inter-professional relationships within a healthcare organization. The purpose of this presentation is to explore the journey of a pre-surgical testing center’s staff’s achievement of multi-disciplinary success (as measured in improved patient flow processes). The inter-professional relationships that existed between the nursing staff, nurse practitioners, and administrative staff were important to consider, and it was imperative to understand how each role intertwined and communicated in order to achieve the team’s goals.

An inter-professional team met on a weekly basis to brainstorm and work towards the identified performance innovation goal of “no wait times for patients who visit the pre-surgical testing center”. This goal was divided in three separate but interconnected initiatives: 1) to increase value-added time for the same-day surgical patient in their interactions with staff, 2) to improve the overall patient experience, and 3) to employ smooth and efficient processes for the diverse pre-surgical testing center clinical staff. Ultimately, the clinic was able to successfully meet the project objectives, but team members were resistant to change at the beginning of the project. Because preconceived ideas and different personal, education, and professional backgrounds were both an asset and a deterrent to the project’s success. During the brainstorming meetings, the staff did not feel “safe” to express feelings initially and had difficulty acknowledging deficiencies in one another’s practice in transparent professional communication. In order to provide clarity and connectivity, the team established lines of transparent communication between each role. These welcome challenges led to individual growth and proved to be beneficial not only to the project, but for the inter-professional team as a whole.

Recognizing differences and viewpoints while respecting each other’s “True North” helped the team tackle dissimilar role cultures and work towards the shared project goal. In doing so, team members set the expectation to mutually respect one another’s existing culture. The synergy of the culturally diverse group of inter-professional staff members was the foundation for the project’s success: the cooperation of all involved facilitated a positive work environment and, most importantly, a marked improvement in the patient experience. At the completion of the project, value-added time for patients increased 66% through decreasing interruption instances during the patient visit. Total appointment duration time markedly decreased from 120 minutes to less than 75 minutes over a one-month period. The success realized by the inter-professional team through this project by demonstrating improved patient processes illustrates the importance of cultural synergy and communication in affecting change. Nurses may apply these concepts in their own practice settings in order to tackle dissimilar cultures and break down barriers and realize multidisciplinary successes.

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References:

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Abstract Summary:

A performance innovation project was conducted within a tertiary care medical center's pre-surgical testing center in order to achieve multidisciplinary success as measured in improved patient flow processes. The project successfully applied the concepts of cultural synergy, change management and transparent communication to achieve collaborative goals.

Content Outline:

1. State the influence of diversity in the workplace and use of cultural synergy in affecting change.
 1. Define diversity.
 2. Identify factors that influence diversity: personal, educational, staff roles (licensed vs. non-licensed).
 3. Define cultural synergy and describe its influence within a High Synergy Organization.

2. Explore the impact of change in the multi-disciplinary workflows in a pre-surgical testing center in an urban tertiary care academic medical center.
 1. Describe the prior workflow in the pre-surgical testing center.
 2. Establish the importance of collaborative identification of improvement opportunities.
 3. Share group actions and the evaluation of new processes

3. State opportunities for overcoming communication challenges when working through collaboration multidisciplinary goals.

1. Describe the importance of crucial conversations when affecting change in multidisciplinary work projects.
2. Communicate the current and future states of professional and transparent communication patterns in the collaborative pursuit of multi-disciplinary growth.

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Professional Experience: The presenter has over 30 years of nursing experience in multiple practice settings. She has held a wide range of roles, including positions as an inpatient surgical clinical nurse, critical care nurse, perioperative nurse, cardiology/medical device research nurse, clinical faculty for diploma nursing education, and has worked in nursing management. She graduated with her Diploma in Nursing from Union Memorial Hospital School of Nursing in 1987, and has since furthered her nursing education where she was conferred with a Masters of Science in Health Leadership and Services Management – Executive Practice in 2014 from University of Maryland School of Nursing.

Author Summary: In her approximately 10 years of nursing management experience, the speaker has been responsible for developing and mentoring both licensed and un-licensed personnel and understands the challenges of positively motivating staff. She currently practices as a Senior Clinical Nurse in a pre-surgical testing center in a tertiary care academic medical center in Baltimore, Maryland.