

The following case study is intended to help you understand the importance of effective communication among **all** members of the healthcare team.

Thomas, an RN on a busy medical-surgical unit, is caring for 32 year old Sofia who is a Hispanic female admitted with hypoglycemia. During patient rounding, Dr. Payne notes that Sofia has a glucose level of 42. He writes an order for an amp of D50 and a CXR. Upon completion of the orders, he hands the patient's chart to the unit coordinator.

Just as the patient is leaving for her x-ray, Anna, RN comes in to relieve Thomas for lunch. Thomas reports the following to Anna: patient is alert and oriented to self only. She has not spoken since admission and only nods when her name is called. Dr. Payne made rounds but did not report any changes in treatment for Sofia at this time. The unit coordinator did state that there was a new order for an x-ray and the patient has just been transported to the x-ray department by the orderly.

Ten minutes after receiving report, Anna receives a call from the x-ray tech who states they cannot perform the x-ray because the patient does not have an armband on and she is speaking in Spanish. Anna goes to the x-ray department and is unable to identify the patient, so she asks for a Spanish-speaking interpreter. The interpreter states that the patient is confused.

Anna returns Sofia to her room and checks the chart. She finds the new order for D50 and administers the medication immediately. The patient wakes up and is alert and oriented at this time.

1. Identify the team members involved in this scenario.

- Thomas (RN)
- Anna (RN)
- Dr. Payne
- Unit coordinator
- Interpreter
- X-ray technician
- Sofia (patient)

2. Identify the errors which took place in this scenario.

Errors that took place within this scenario include:

- failure to administer D50 immediately despite the patient's glucose level of 42
- patient transported off unit without proper wristband identification

- patient transported off unit unstable
- assuming the patient's baseline and current status
- incomplete hand-off report
- unaddressed cultural and language barrier between patient and staff
- failure of proper communication within the interdisciplinary team
- nurse Thomas failed to review the patients chart and ensure stability visually before leaving for lunch

3. Identify what was done correctly in this scenario.

Within this scenario, interventions that were done correctly include:

- Thomas (RN) was relieved by Anna (RN) before heading to lunch
- x-ray refused to perform the scan due to patient being unable to communicate
- x-ray refused to perform the scan due to patient not having an identification wristband
- Nurse Anna recognized the need for an interpreter and provided one efficiently
- Nurse Anna reviewed the patient's chart and orders, recognizing that a medication needed to be administered
- Nurse Anna administered the D50 promptly

4. If you were Thomas, what would you have done differently?

If I were Thomas, I would have done the following:

- Administered D50 immediately upon the patient's blood glucose level being 42
- Ensured proper communication with the patient to then identify cultural/language barrier
- Implemented the proper interpreter to assist the patient with communication
- Continuously review the patient's chart and assess stability
- Not go to lunch at the same time a patient is going off the floor for testing
- Provide a proper hand-off report to the nurse taking over
- Ensure proper interdisciplinary communication

5. If you were Anna, what would you have done differently?

If I were Anna, I would have done the following:

- Clarified the patients baseline status and assessed accordingly
- Ensured patient stability before going off unit for testing
- Reviewed the chart to identify any immediate need for intervention
- Confirmed patient identification
- Initiated interpreter services appropriately
- Request an appropriate patients hand-off report
- Sought clarification and communication with interdisciplinary team

6. In addition to the team members identified in the scenario, who are some individuals in the healthcare setting who must communicate with one another?

- Respiratory therapists
- Case managers
- Social workers
- Nursing supervisor
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Patient care technicians
- Dietitians
- Pharmacists
- Laboratory
- Patient advocate
- Specialty consultants

7. What should you consider when communicating with others?

When communicating with other staff members it is important to seek clarification on information when needed. Participate in proper hand-off report, preferably at the bedside to ensure patient safety and status. Along with having proper time management and addressing any cultural and/or language barriers. It is essential that the patient and all staff members have a mutual understanding.

