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5 Sign Out Down the Alley: A Novel Workshop-Based Approach to Teaching ED Transitions of Care

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Introduction: Transitions of care (TOC) are high-risk, yet residents receive little to no education regarding techniques to improve safety, communication and documentation during handoffs.

Learning Objective: To assess the effectiveness of a simulated serial handoff activity on residents’ perceptions of the importance of education around TOC.

Curricular Design: Post graduate year (PGY) 1-3 residents were placed into teams of four and introduced in serial fashion to a low fidelity simulated clinical scenario. They proceeded to transition care in a “whisper down the alley” fashion, where each team member formulated a care plan and handed off to the next resident. Each subsequent TOC involved introduction of new clinical data. After each TOC, the residents involved documented the information given and received. Faculty facilitators also presented routine distractions. Afterwards, all participating residents discussed the initial clinical scenario and care plan. The group then reviewed the documentation for errors that were introduced over the course of the activity. Faculty facilitators then led a discussion on standardized documentation and how templates might be implemented effectively in the emergency department.

Impact/Effectiveness: The activity increased residents’ perceptions of the value of education around TOC. 76.9% of respondents (n=13) reported that they had not previously participated in structured activities around TOCs and 92.3% said they did not use a standardized form of TOC. 100% found the activity useful. Residents stated that completing this activity would lead them to review patients’ charts together, increase documentation after receiving a patient and increase efforts to ensure closed loop communication. Aggregated commentary

regarding take home points and anticipated practice change is included in Table 1. 100% of respondents thought TOC education should be incorporated into the curriculum, ideally during orientation or the PGY1 year.

Table 1. Resident commentary on takeaways and anticipated practice change following the Sign Out Down the Alley workshop

What did you take away from the Sign Out Whisper Down the Alley activity?
“Sign out/transfer of care is extremely variable, contributing to its already high-risk nature. Should be more structured”
“It showed the big effects that small details in sign out can have, but also how a good sign out can remain the same for multiple hand offs”
“It’s important to be clear and concise at sign out”
“To be more aware of pertinent questions to ask when getting sign out”
“How important things can get lost easily, to re-emphasize and stress what you think is the most important”
“It was a good example of the dangers of disorganized sign out as well as the difficulty of doing a good sign out with incomplete information and/or multiple interruptions”
“It made me more aware of how things get short-handed or papered over in sign out, especially on a patient who is in the early stages of work up”
“I think the big takeaway is that we don’t have a consistent style of doing hand offs; when we are paying very close attention to one case it’s good but in real life, it’s not always so smooth.”
“Emphasized how important a structured and standardized hand off is as the two groups had two pretty different final presentations!”
What, if anything, about your practices at patient hand offs will change as a result of this activity?
“Clear documentation; ED addendum TOC notes”
“Really to just be more mindful of pitfalls when signing out and to take a more standardized approach”
“Pulling up patients to review them together”
“Trying to be more clear and concise at sign out”
“Being more clear about what needs to be followed up when giving sign out and making sure to ask questions when receiving sign out”
“More structured”
“Closed loop communication, repetition”
“I will use a more structured sign out format going forward”
“It reminded me how important it is to try to write MDMs for patients prior to hand off so that I make sure not to leave out or overlook any key pieces of info”
“I think there was good emphasis on signing out a clear plan”
“Better hand offs”
“Using the hand off print out and an Epic sign out template more consistently, always synthesizing the hand off by the receiver”