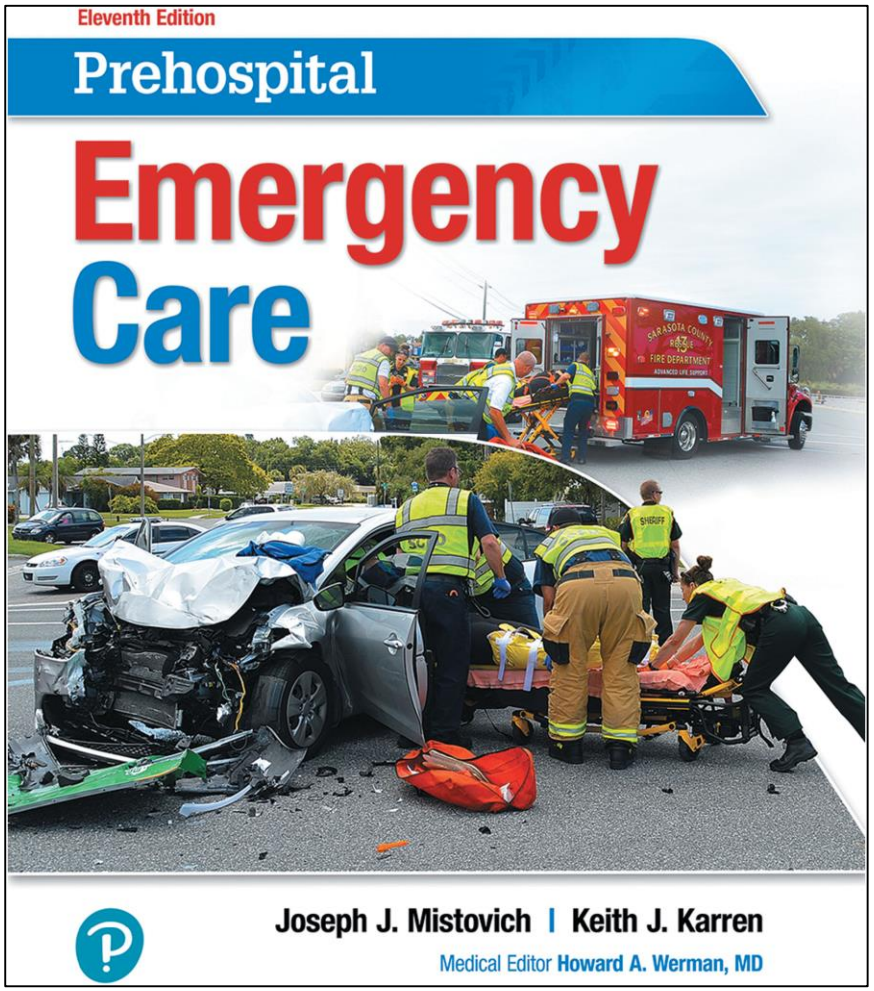
Prehospital: Emergency Care

Eleventh Edition



Chapter 5

Communication

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Introduction

- Every EMS call involves communication.
- Radio communication involves specialized communications equipment.
- EMTs must be able to communicate effectively with patients, family members, bystanders, team members, and other health care providers.

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EMS Communications System (1 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Base station
    - Serves as a dispatch and coordination center
    - High power output (80-150 watts)

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EMS Communications Center

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EMS Communications System (2 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Land mobile radio systems
    - Vehicle-mounted transmitter/receivers
    - Lower power than base stations
    - 10- to 15-mile range

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A Small Mobile Two-Way Radio Installed next to the Driver's Seat in the Ambulance and can be Used to Contact Dispatch

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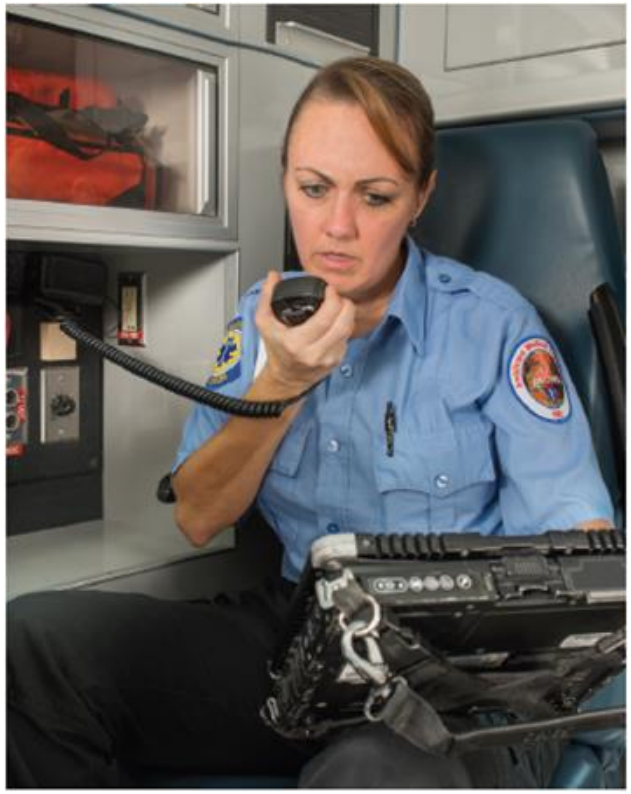
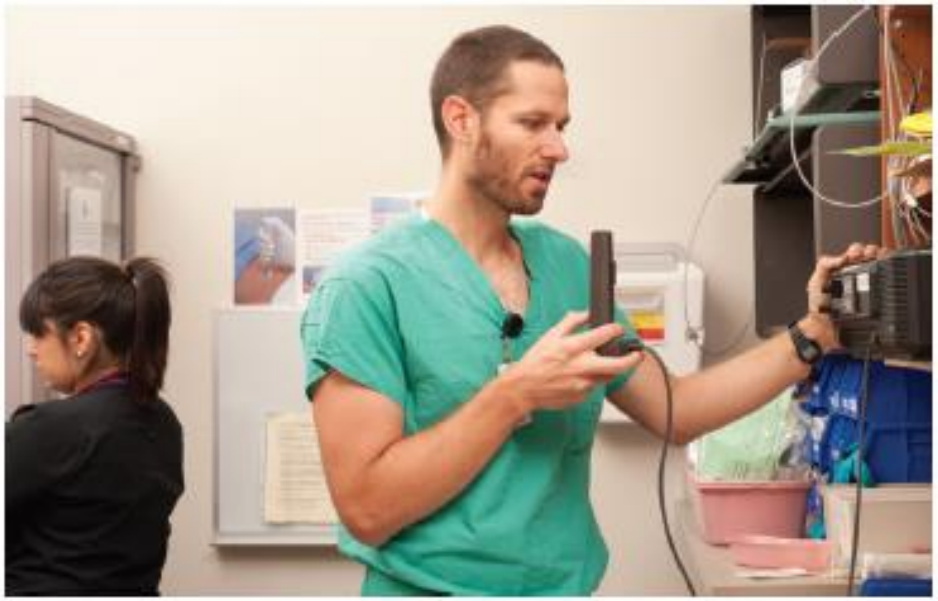
An EMT Using the Two-Way Radio in the Ambulance Patient Compartment to Contact Medical Direction





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EMS Communications System (3 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Portable radio
    - Handheld transmitter/receiver
    - Used when EMTs are out of the vehicle
    - Limited transmission range
    - Transmission can be boosted by use of a repeater

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A Portable Hand-Held Radio

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EMS Communications System (4 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Repeaters
    - Receive lower-power transmissions and amplify them to achieve greater radio range
    - Located in vehicles or at fixed sites

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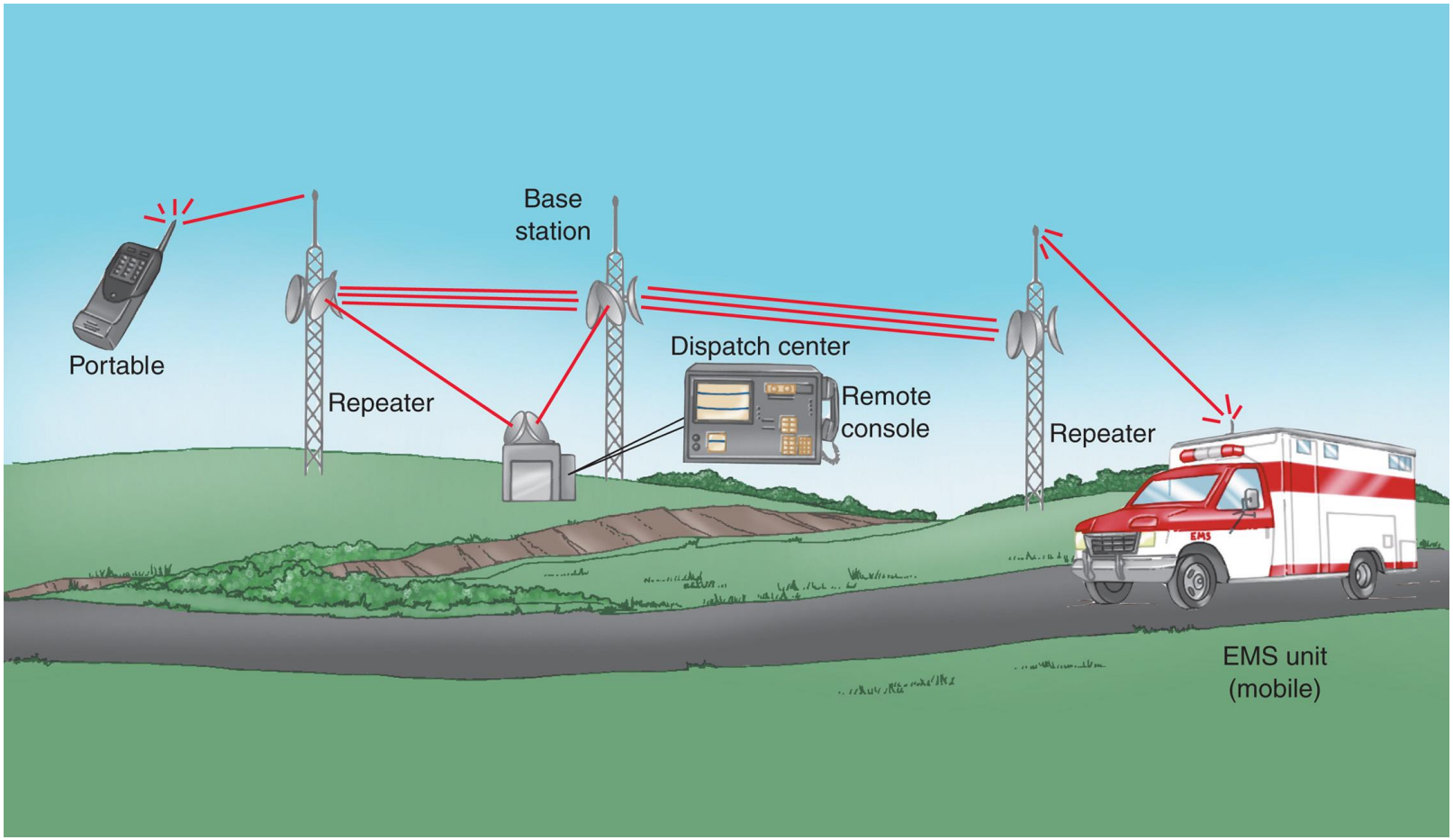
Example of an EMS Communication System Using Repeaters



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EMS Communications System (5 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Digital equipment
    - Allows more radios to operate on crowded frequencies
    - Utilizes encoders and decoders
    - Includes mobile data terminals that can transmit messages at the push of a button

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Mobile Data Terminals

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EMS Communications System (6 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Cellular (wireless) phones
    - Phones transmit through the air, rather than over wires.
    - Networks can become overwhelmed in disaster situations.
    - Excellent quality sound.

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Use of Cellular (Wireless) Phone is Very Common in EMS

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EMS Communications System (7 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Telemetry
    - Transmission of patient data
    - ECGs, vital signs, etc.

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EMS Communications System (8 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Land mobile satellite communications
    - Often used in remote areas
    - Communication uses satellites to help relay message

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EMS Communications System (9 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - Broadcast regulations
    - Radio operations are governed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

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EMS Communications System (10 of 10)

- Components of an Emergency Communication System
  - System maintenance
    - Routine cleaning
    - Regular maintenance schedule
    - Changing and charging batteries
    - Carry backup batteries

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Communicating Within the System (1 of 22)

- EMTs communicate with:
  - Dispatch
  - Medical direction
  - Receiving facility personnel

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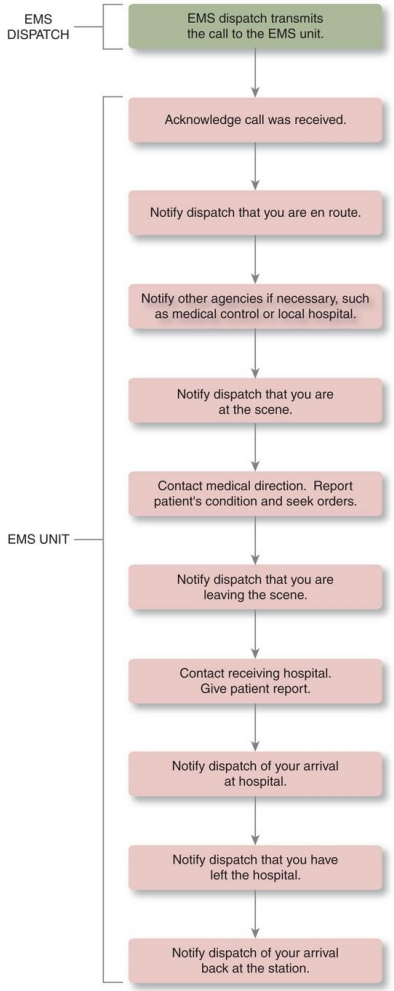
Progression of Radio Transmissions



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Communicating Within the System (2 of 22)

- Ground Rules for Radio Communication
  1. Turn on the radio and select the frequency.
  2. Listen before transmitting and adjust volume.
  3. Press the “push-to-talk” button and wait one second before speaking.

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Communicating Within the System (3 of 22)

- Ground Rules for Radio Communication
  4. Place the microphone two to three inches from your mouth; speak slowly, clearly, and calmly.
  5. The unit you're calling should respond with "go ahead" or "stand by."

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Hold the Microphone About Two Inches from Your Lips as You Speak into It

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Communicating Within the System (4 of 22)

- Ground Rules for Radio Communication
  6. Keep transmissions brief.
  7. Be organized, use plain English; avoid slang and jargon.
  8. When a number could be confusing over the air, follow it with the digits.
     - For example, “Thirteen,” would be stated “One-three.”

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Communicating Within the System (5 of 22)

- Ground Rules for Radio Communication
  9. Give objective information and selected subjective information from the patient assessment.
  10. Echo medical orders.
  11. Write down important information, such as addresses and medication orders.

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Communicating Within the System (6 of 22)

- Ground Rules for Radio Communication
  12. Remember that others can hear what you're saying.
  13. Use "we," rather than "I."
  14. Use "affirmative" for "yes," and "negative" for "no."
  15. When finished, say "over," and wait for confirmation from the receiving party.

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Communicating Within the System (7 of 22)

- Phone/Cellular Phone Communication
  - Format of reports is the same.
  - Be aware of cellular dead spots.
  - Have a backup plan for communication.
  - Know important telephone numbers.

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Communicating Within the System (8 of 22)

- Communicating with Dispatch
  - Dispatch receives information from callers and directs emergency services to the scene.
  - Emergency medical dispatchers provide instructions to the caller while awaiting EMS arrival.

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Communicating Within the System (9 of 22)

- Communicating with Dispatch
  - Dispatchers may receive information from the advanced automatic collision notification (AACN) systems in some newer vehicle models.
  - Information provided can be critical in locating the collision and predicting severity of injury.

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Communicating Within the System (10 of 22)

- Communicating with Dispatch
  - Typical communication points:
    - To acknowledge that dispatch information was received
    - To advise dispatch when the unit is en route to a call
    - To estimate your time of arrival and report any delays

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Communicating Within the System (11 of 22)

- Communicating with Dispatch
  - Typical communication points:
    - To announce the unit's arrival on scene and, if needed, request additional resources
    - To announce the unit's departure from the scene, transport destination, number of patients, and estimated arrival time

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Communicating Within the System (12 of 22)

- Communicating with Dispatch
  - Typical communication points:
    - To announce arrival at the receiving facility
    - To announce when you're available for another call
    - To announce when you're en route back to the station
    - To announce arrival at your station

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Communicating Within the System (13 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Medical direction
    - Medical direction may be located at the receiving facility or elsewhere.
    - On many calls you will consult with medical direction.
    - Medical direction may give orders and advice.

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Communicating Within the System (14 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Medical direction
    - Be clear.
    - Echo orders.
    - Ask for clarification of orders, if needed.
    - If the order seems inappropriate, ask questions.

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Communicating Within the System (15 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Communicate this information to medical direction:
    - Your unit's identification number and level of care
    - The patient's age and sex
    - The patient's chief complaint
    - History of the present illness

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Communicating Within the System (16 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Communicate this information to medical direction:
    - Patient's past medical history
    - Patient's mental status
    - Patient's baseline vital signs
    - Physical exam findings

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Communicating Within the System (17 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Communicate this information to medical direction:
    - Emergency care provided
    - Patient's response to emergency care
    - Patient's current condition
    - Request for further interventions
    - Estimated time of arrival

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Communicating Within the System (18 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Additional guidelines for communicating with medical direction
    - Use SBAR to organize information.
      - **S**ituation
      - **B**ackground
      - **A**ssessment
      - **R**ecommendation

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Communicating Within the System (19 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Receiving facility
    - Pertinent information allows the facility to prepare for the patient.
    - The information provided is similar to that provided for medical direction.
    - Notify the facility of changes that occur after the report is given.

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Communicating Within the System (20 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - Provide an oral report on arrival at receiving facility.

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Communicating Within the System (21 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - When transferring patient care, the report should include:
    - The patient's current condition
    - The patient's age and gender
    - The patient's chief complaint
    - A brief, pertinent history
    - How you found the patient

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Communicating Within the System (22 of 22)

- Communicating with Health Care Professionals
  - When transferring patient care, the report should include:
    - Major past illnesses
    - Vital signs
    - Pertinent exam findings
    - Treatment provided
    - Patient's response to treatment

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Team Communication and Dynamics (1 of 5)

- Taking Charge
  - EMTs must be able to confidently take charge.
  - EMTs interact with fire, rescue, law enforcement, and other health care professionals.
  - The EMT must be the advocate for good and proper patient care.

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Team Communication and Dynamics (2 of 5)

- Radio codes
  - Advantages
    - Can shorten radio air time
    - Can provide information clearly and concisely
    - Can allow for privacy by transmitting information not easily understood by bystanders

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Team Communication and Dynamics (3 of 5)

- Radio codes
  - Disadvantages
    - Useless unless they are understood by all in the system
    - Medical communication may be too complex to be conveyed in codes
    - Some codes are used infrequently and must be looked up

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Team Communication and Dynamics (4 of 5)

- Times
  - Clocks must be accurate and synchronous.
  - Military time system is generally used.
    - 1427 hours is 2:27 p.m.
    - 0030 hours is 30 minutes after midnight

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Team Communication and Dynamics (5 of 5)

- Radio Terms
  - Frequently used words or short phrases are used to concisely convey meaning.
  - Examples include:
    - Break, clear, copy, ETA, and 10-4, landline, stand by, over

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Therapeutic Communication (1 of 22)

- Principles of Patient Communication
  - Therapeutic communication fosters a positive patient relationship.
  - Messages composed of thoughts, ideas, information, emotion.
  - Many factors can influence how a person interprets these messages.

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Therapeutic Communication (2 of 22)

- The Communication Process
  - Sender encodes a message.
  - Receiver decodes the message.
  - Feedback received by sender helps to determine if the message was received as desired.

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Therapeutic Communication (3 of 22)

- Communication Responses
  - Techniques to improve provider and patient communication
    - Facilitation
    - Clarification
    - Summary
    - Explanation
    - Silence
    - Empathy
    - Confrontation
    - Facilitated communication

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Therapeutic Communication (5 of 22)

- Communicating with the Patient
  - People at an emergency scene may be experiencing high-intensity emotions, which can affect communication.
  - Use the three C's:
    - Confidence, compassion and cooperation.

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Therapeutic Communication (6 of 22)

- Patient Contact
  - First impressions are critical, and include your appearance and professionalism.
  - Introduce yourself, your team, and ask the patient's name.
    - Determine what he or she wishes to be called.
    - Use the patient's name.

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Therapeutic Communication (7 of 22)

- Patient Contact
  - Obtain permission to treat.
    - If the patient refuses, seek to understand the reason, which may be related to fear or defense mechanisms.
  - Be wary of defense mechanisms.

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Therapeutic Communication (8 of 22)

- Patient Contact
  - Speak clearly, calmly, slowly; use plain language that avoids jargon.
  - Speak professionally and with concern and compassion.
  - Respect the patient's privacy.

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Therapeutic Communication (9 of 22)

- Patient Contact
  - Limit interruptions in communication.
  - Be aware of your position relative to the patient, body language, and the use of space.
  - Control the physical environment, if possible, for the amount of noise and light.

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Therapeutic Communication (10 of 22)

- Patient Contact
  - Be courteous, give choices when possible.
  - Actively listen to your patient.
  - Be honest with your answers and statements made to the patient.

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Therapeutic Communication (11 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Conduct interview to gain information.
  - Knowing what questions to ask is key.
  - Use of interviewing techniques allows you to gather necessary information.

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Therapeutic Communication (12 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Nonverbal communication
    - Posture
      - Position of yourself in relative to patient
      - Convey a message of concern

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Therapeutic Communication (13 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Nonverbal communication
    - Distance
      - Intimate zone
    - Gestures
    - Eye contact
    - Haptics

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Therapeutic Communication (14 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Asking questions
    - Ask one question at a time.
    - Give the patient time to answer.
    - Listen to the response.
    - Choose language the patient understands.

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Therapeutic Communication (15 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Asking questions
    - Open-ended questions
      - Allow the patient to give a detailed response.
      - Answers provide detailed information.
      - An example is, “How are you feeling?”

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Therapeutic Communication (16 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Asking questions
    - Closed-ended questions
      - Also called direct questions.
      - Used to get information quickly or to follow up on open-ended questions to get specifics.
      - An example is, “What medications do you take?”

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Therapeutic Communication (17 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Considerations in interviewing
    - Do not ask leading or biased questions.
    - Do not interrupt the patient.
    - Be aware of too much talking by you or the patient.
    - Do not provide false reassurance.
    - Do not give inappropriate advice.

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Therapeutic Communication (18 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Considerations in interviewing
    - Do not ask “why” questions that imply blame.
    - Manage the presence and interactions of family members.
    - Motivating the unmotivated patient.
    - Interviewing a hostile patient.

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Therapeutic Communication (19 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Special circumstances
    - Transcultural considerations
    - Elderly patients
    - Young patients

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Therapeutic Communication (20 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Special circumstances - Transcultural
    - Cultures view space differently; watch for feedback.
    - If there is a language barrier, seek an interpreter.
    - Be aware of potential filtering of information by interpreters.

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Therapeutic Communication (21 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Special circumstances - Elderly
    - Additional time may be needed when interviewing elderly patients.
    - Do not make assumptions about hearing and vision problems, but be alert that they may exist.
    - Retrieve hearing aids or write questions on a pad of paper, if needed.

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Therapeutic Communication (22 of 22)

- The Patient Interview
  - Special circumstances - Children
    - Use extra patience with children.
    - Obtain the parents' assistance in communicating with the child.
    - Position yourself at the child's eye level.
    - Use simple, direct language.
    - Be honest.

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Lesson Summary (1 of 2)

- EMS system communication and therapeutic communication are key EMT skills.
- Radio equipment includes base stations, mobile radios, portable radios, and repeaters.
- Follow basic ground rules for radio communication.

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Lesson Summary (2 of 2)

- EMTs communicate with dispatch at key points during calls.
- EMTs communicate with medical direction and personnel at the receiving facility.
- Therapeutic communication is critical to good patient care.

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