

Closed-Loop Communication

William Leininger, MD

As defined in the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality TeamSTEPPS Fundamentals Course, closed-looped communication is:

...the process of acknowledging the receipt of information and clarifying with the sender that the intended information has been received. In essence, it is a process for confirming and cross-checking information for accuracy. This style of communication fosters the ability to ensure that the entire team has shared goals, expectations, awareness, and plan execution.¹

The following is an example of closed-loop communication that might occur in the labor and delivery unit in the setting of postpartum hemorrhage:

Physician: "Could you give methergine, 0.2 mg IM, now, please?"

Nurse: "I'll get methergine, 0.2 mg IM, to give immediately."

Then, when the medicine is ready to be administered:

Nurse: "Doctor, I'm going to give methergine, 0.2 mg IM."

Physician: "That's correct, please give methergine, 0.2 mg IM."

While closed-loop communication may sound awkward at first, and it requires practice to execute smoothly, this form of communication is an important step to prevent medical errors.

Reference Materials

1. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. TeamSTEPPS Fundamentals Course: Module 3. Evidence-Based Communication. Available at:

<https://www.ahrq.gov/teamstepps/instructor/fundamentals/module3/ebcommunication.html>.

Accessed November 2022.

Additional Reading

Weller J, Boyd M, Cumin D. Teams, tribes and patient safety: overcoming barriers to effective teamwork in healthcare. *Postgrad Med J*. 2014;90(1061):149-154. PMID: 24398594