Communication Basics

Communication is a process in which a message is transmitted from a sender to a receiver. The goal of communication is to deliver that message in a manner that is understood by the recipient. The communication process consists of the following six components:

- Message: the information that you wish to convey
- Sender: the person who is delivering the message
- Encoding: the translation of the message into words or signals
- Channel: the medium through which the encoded message is transmitted (e.g., a face-to-face discussion, a radio, a telephone, in writing)
- Decoding: the translation of the message into meaning by the receiver(s)
- Receiver: the person or group for whom the message is intended

Miscommunication occurs when the receiver does not interpret the message as originally intended by the sender. This can be due to any number of factors, known as noise, which can affect any or all of the components of communication. If, for instance, the original message was properly encoded, transmitted, and decoded by the receiver but was unclear to begin with, the message will likely be unclear. Similarly, factors affecting the channel used to transmit the message, such as a dead spot resulting in gaps in radio or cell phone transmission, can cause miscommunication. Even face-to-face conversations are not immune to communication problems; stress, information overload, and a host of other factors can adversely affect how a message is transmitted, received, or interpreted.

Because errors can arise anywhere along the communication process, it is important that senders obtain ongoing feedback from receivers to ensure that the intended message was both received and accurately interpreted. Such feedback will greatly improve the quality of communication and reduce errors.

8-1 List the two types of medical communications.

Forms of Communication

Humans communicate with one another through various forms, including verbally (including orally and in writing) and nonverbally. Verbal communication involves the use of words and is the primary means by which humans communicate with one another—especially face to face, or orally (Figure 8-3■). Studies show that most humans have a vocabulary of approximately 10,000 words and speak at a rate of 125–150 words per minute. However, they are capable of listening at a rate of 275–300 words per minute and can think at rates of up to 500 words per minute. This listening-to-speaking gap may help explain why people sometimes "tune-out" parts of conversations, which can result in miscommunication.

Written communication involves the use of words or symbols.

Nonverbal communication is defined as communicating without words and includes behaviors such as facial expressions, eye movements, hand gestures, touch, vocal tone, body posture, positioning, and movement (Figure 8-4■). Studies indicate that as much as 93 percent of communication between humans is nonverbal.

Figure 8-3 Good oral communication skills are essential when in contact with the public.

section in which the OEC Technician writes in all pertinent findings and incident-related content. Because they are more loosely structured, these forms generally take more time to complete than either closed- or mixed-format PCRs (Figure 8-11■).

A mixed-format PCR combines the two previous styles and includes both check boxes for common types of data and blanks into which specific comments or information are written (Figure 8-12■).

Nearly all PCRs include a section for recording serial sets of vital signs. A simple PCR that OEC Technicians might use for seriously ill or injured patients may contain places to record serial sets of vital signs, skin color, temperature, and level of consciousness. The SAMPLE acronym can also be found on many of these forms (Figure 8-13■). Most ski areas require OEC Technicians to fill out the NSAA form (or an equivalent), and when a patient needs further medical documentation because of significant injury or illness, a form like the one shown in Figure 8-13 may be used.

BLUE RIDGE SKI RESORT
PATIENT CARE REPORT

Name: _____ Sex:_____ Age:_____

S:	A:
O:	M:
A:	P:
P:	L:
	E:

VITAL SIGNS

Time	Pulse	Blood Pressure	Respirations	LOC
1				
2				
3				
4				

TREATMENT:

PATIENT CONDITION:	**TRANSPORT:**

Figure 8-11 A sample of a ski area open-format patient care report.
Courtesy of Dr. David Johe