MANAGING CONFLICT IN THE PHARMACY WORKPLACE

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the various types of conflict that pharmacists and preceptors will likely encounter
- Describe the differences between various conflict management styles
- Define the common emotional and physical reactions elicited by conflict and strategies to respond
- Utilize effective communication and active listening skills to promote favorable outcomes

CONFLICT

Mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands

Merriam-Webster OnLine
<http://www.m-w.com/dictionary/conflict>

CONFLICT WITH...

- Pharmacists
- Technicians
- Interns
- Supervisor
- Manager of another department
- Customers
- Physicians
- Schedule
- Management style
- Responsibility or accountability
CONFLICT WITH TECHNICIANS
- Schedule
- Tardiness
- Job responsibilities
- Level of performance

CONFLICT WITH INTERNS
- Development
- Professionalism

CONFLICT WITH SUPERVISOR
- Level of support
- Authority

CONFLICT WITH OTHER DEPARTMENT MANAGERS
- Management style
- Responsibility
- Customer service

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CONFLICT WITH CUSTOMERS
- Insurance issues
- Price
- Wait time
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CONFLICT WITH PHYSICIANS
- Formulary restrictions
- Recommendations
  - Medication change
  - Dosage change

CONFLICT AMONGST TEAM
- Schedule
- Responsibility
- Competition

CONFLICT STYLES
- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Compromise
- Competition
- Collaboration

AVOIDANCE
- Some people attempt to avoid conflict by postponing it, hiding their feelings, changing the subject or leaving the room
- Avoidance may be appropriate when:
  - The conflict is small and not worth our time to respond
  - We need time to calm down because relationships are at stake
  - Time is needed to gather more information
- Avoidance may NOT be appropriate when:
  - The issue is very important
  - A decision is needed quickly
  - No decision has a major impact on the situation
  - Postponing the issue will only make matters worse

ACCOMMODATION
- Convenient strategy to satisfy an immediate need for individuals or the group
- Emphasizes the things conflicting parties have in common and de-emphasizes the differences
- Helpful strategy for a group to review their common purpose in the midst of conflict
- Accommodation should NOT be used if an important issue is at stake, which needs to be addressed immediately
**COMPROMISE**
- Appropriate when all parties are satisfied with a part of their requests and are willing to be flexible
- Compromise is mutual for all parties; each should receive something, and each will need to give something up
- Compromise works when:
  - Both parties are willing to reduce some demands
  - An intermediate solution saves time and effort for both sides
- Compromise doesn't work when:
  - Initial demands are too great from the beginning
  - There is no commitment to honor the compromise

**COMPETITION**
- A strategy used to exercise power
- Competition will enable one party to win; eventually someone wins and someone loses
- Before addressing conflict with competition, it is important to decide whether or not ‘winning’ this conflict is beneficial to individuals or the group
- Competition will not enhance a group's ability to work together - it reduces cooperation

**COLLABORATING**
- Encourages teamwork and cooperation within a group
- Collaboration does not establish winners and losers, and does not gain power over others
- Collaboration is best when:
  - Individuals trust and respect one another
  - There is time for all parties to share their views and feelings
  - Members want the best solution for the larger group
  - Individuals are willing to change their thinking when more information is found and new options are suggested
- Collaboration may NOT be best when:
  - Time is limited and people must act before they can work through their conflict
  - There is not enough trust, respect or communication among the group for collaboration to occur

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**EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT**
- Hurt
- Frightened
- Ignored
- Confused
- Isolated
- Challenged
- Unwanted
- Disliked
- Put down
- Controlled
- Judged

**PHYSICAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT**
- Stress
- Tension
- Increased perspiration
- Change in breathing
- Nausea
- Increased heart rate
DEALING WITH STRESS
- Share your feelings
- Focus on problem-solving
- Address issues while they are still small

MANAGING CONFLICT
1. Know Yourself
   - Understand your 'filters', biases, triggers
   - Clarify personal needs threatened by the dispute
     - Substantive, procedural, and psychological needs
2. Identify 'desired outcomes' from a negotiated process
3. Identify a safe place for negotiation
   - Identify appropriate space for discussion - private and neutral
   - Obtain mutual consent to negotiate at the appropriate time
   - Define roles of support people (e.g., facilitators, mediators, advocates), as needed
   - Gain agreement on ground rules

MANAGING CONFLICT (CONT’D.)
4. Take a listening stance in the interaction
   - “Seek first to understand, then to be understood” (Covey)
   - Use active listening skills
5. Assert your needs clearly and specifically
   - Use 'I-messages' as tools for clarification
   - Build from what you have heard - continue to listen well
6. Approach problem-solving with flexibility
   - Identify issues clearly and concisely
   - Generate options (i.e., brainstorm), while deferring judgment
   - Be open to tangents and other problem definitions
   - Establish criteria for decision-making

MANAGING CONFLICT (CONT’D.)
7. Manage impasse calmly, patiently, and respectfully
   - Clarify feelings
   - Focus on underlying needs, interests, and concerns
   - Take a break, as needed
8. Build an agreement that works
   - Review hallmarks of a good agreement
   - Implement and evaluate - live and learn
MANAGING CONFLICT (CONT’D.)

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CONFlict Amongst Team

1. Meet with the involved team members together
2. Ask each to briefly summarize their point of view
3. Let them know that you expect them to resolve the issue proactively
4. Explore and discuss solutions and commit to making the changes necessary to resolve the conflict
5. Assure both parties that you have every faith in their ability to resolve their differences
6. Set clear goals and know how you will measure success

POSITIVE FEELINGS AFTER PROPER HANDLING OF CONFLICT

- Hurt
- Frightened
- Ignored
- Confused
- Isolated
- Challenged
- Unwanted
- Disliked
- Put down
- Controlled
- Judged
- Cared for
- Relieved
- Listened to
- Clear on things
- Closer with others
- Challenged to grow
- Accepted by others
- Respected
- Supported
- Understood
- Accepted

COMMUNICATION SKILLS 101

- One of the most important skills for practitioners in any situation
- Miscommunication happens in all facets of life
- Magnified during times of conflict
- Frustration and anger
GOALS OF COMMUNICATION

- Deliver accurate information
- Assess whether the message conveyed is understood
- Benefits
  - Better rapport
  - Enhanced credibility

COMMUNICATION MODEL

MESSAGE

- Element being transmitted between sender and receiver
- Transmitted through verbal and nonverbal mechanisms
- Content may change between sender and receiver

ENCODING

- The process of transferring the information you want to communicate into a form that can be sent and correctly decoded at the other end

CHANNEL

- Conduit to deliver the message
- Verbal channels
  - Face-to-face meetings
  - Telephone
  - Videoconferencing
- Written channels
  - Letters
  - Email
  - Memos
  - Reports
**Decoding**
- The process of interpreting the information that was communicated
- Taking the time to read a message carefully, or listen actively

**Receiver**
- Accepts the message from the sender
- "Decodes" the message
- Translated message may be different than sender intended
- Verbal and nonverbal information also decoded

**Feedback**
- Verification of the message is determined
- Sender gets response of either understanding or misunderstanding
- Sender can only verify if information is accurate by the feedback from the receiver
- Can be verbal and/or nonverbal
- May require active solicitation on the part of the sender

**Context**
- The situation in which your message is delivered
- May include the surrounding environment or broader culture (e.g., corporate culture, international cultures, etc.)

**Removing Barriers**
- Within the message, within the context, and across cultures
- Eliminating noise
  - Physical/External
  - Physiological
  - Psychological/Internal
  - Semantic

**Listening Skills**
- Listening...
  - Improves communication
  - Puts you in control of the situation
  - Lessens arguments
  - Shows you care
ACTIVE LISTENING INVOLVES...

- Demonstrating empathy for the speaker
- Understanding nonverbal communication and how it affects your perception of what's being said
- Being prepared to listen
- Understanding all of the ‘noises’ - emotional filters that affect your perception of what is being said
- Being motivated to listen
- Being nonjudgmental about the speaker

FIVE STEPS TO ACTIVE LISTENING

1. Listen to the content
   - Listen to what the speaker is saying in terms of facts and ideas

2. Listen to the intent
   - Listen to the emotional meaning of the speaker and what he or she is saying
   - Use your intuition to ‘hear’ the underlying messages

FIVE STEPS TO ACTIVE LISTENING (CONT’D.)

3. Assess the speaker’s nonverbal communication
   - Read and interpret what the speaker is ‘saying’ with his or her body language and other nonverbal signs

FIVE STEPS TO ACTIVE LISTENING (CONT’D.)

4. Monitor your nonverbal communication and emotional filters
   - Be aware of the messages you are sending with your nonverbal communication
   - Be aware of the emotional filters that affect your understanding of the receiver

FIVE STEPS TO ACTIVE LISTENING (CONT’D.)

5. Listen to the speaker nonjudgmentally and with empathy
   - Try to put yourself in the speaker’s shoes and understand what is shaping his or her feelings
   - Don’t prejudge the speaker

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL FILTERS THAT AFFECT LISTENING

- Your mindset filters the information you receive and can often prevent you from listening actively and objectively
- Immediate filters
  - Those that change depending on current situations
- Long-term filters
  - Formed by your values, religious upbringing, culture, the region in which you grew up, and even your parents’ political biases
CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING

- Paraphrase Content
  - Rewording by the listener
  - Indicates that you are 'actively' listening
  - Provides the opportunity to verify understanding
- Summarize
  - Verifies accuracy of your interpretation
  - Corrects any mistakes

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

- Conflict will happen no matter how hard we try to avoid it
- Be proactive vs. reactive
- Understand the source for the conflict
- Listen actively
- Be willing to try multiple strategies

REFERENCES


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