

## Conflict Environment in the ICU Workplace

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Conflicts between individuals and groups are commonplace in the ICU workplace.

Individuals and groups with different values, experiences, perceptions, abilities, tasks, needs and goals, are obliged to coexist and collaborate in a complex environment characterized by responsibility of human life, uncertainty and constant change.

The natural consequence of this situation is conflict.

Many times, a “war” within our team of partners erupts from miscommunication or a vague perception of who we are facing.

Conflict Management in the Team.

### 3 basic communication features

1. Ability to take the place of his interlocutor, to see things not only from his own point of view, but also from the point of view of his interlocutor.

We are talking about the concept of empathy, a key ability for effective interpersonal communication.

With empathy, the employee is able to understand exactly what the other wants to say to him, without decoding and interpreting the other's message as he wants.

2. Ability to accept what the other person is saying, keeping his/her critique on the content of the message until the other person is finished.
3. Responsibility to take the "overall picture" of the interlocutor, which means that he should emphasize both the verbal and non-verbal behavior of the other.

The goal is especially for the person in charge of the working group, regardless of whether we are referring to doctors or nursing staff, to possess the communication skill to such an extent that he uses it effortlessly and naturally in his daily contact and interaction with his collaborators - subordinates.

The 3 essential key skills in communicating to a working group in the ICU.

### 1<sup>st</sup> skill - Active listening

- An important role in the quality of interpersonal communication between employees in a working group, plays the skill of everyone to actively listen to their interlocutor.
- Active listening is not a passive process and it does not just mean that I listen without interruption.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> skill - Providing and accepting feedback

- Re-information is defined as any information that may be useful to an employee and that is relevant to his or her behavior and work.
- At the level of interpersonal communication, re-information is any information (verbal or non-verbal) related to the understanding of the messages we receive from others.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> skill - Maintaining self-esteem

- The relationship between self-esteem and the way the manager chooses to behave towards his subordinates determines the level of communication in the workplace.

## Conflict management

Creative and mental conflicts in the working group can be a sign of health.

When members disagree about the results, the approach and the philosophy of the team and discuss their differences in a healthy, productive way, this can bring great results.

But if the conflict remains unresolved, it can undermine the team effort and the common goal.

The conflict is resolved through the mediation of the team leader or a third person, who mediates trying to resolve the differences "by taking and giving" to both parties.

### The concept of conflict

Traditionally, conflicts have been treated as a negative phenomenon that should have been avoided because of the malfunctions and negative effects it creates.

They therefore believed that conflicts stemmed from individuals' personality problems or from failed leadership and should be avoided because of their negative consequences.

Today, however, the modern perception of management believes that conflicts are inevitable, mainly due to the complexity of structures, processes, rules, techniques and systems of the work environment and can have both negative and positive consequences.

### Forms of conflict

Interpersonal conflicts are those that take place between individuals, within the working group.

Group conflicts are those that take place between groups (involving large companies with many structures).

### Causes of conflict

#### Conflicting objectives

When two groups have goals whose achievement precludes their achievement, then each side develops behavior that aims to achieve its goal, to the detriment of the other side's goal, and thus the conflict is created.

#### Limited resources

- The distribution of limited ICU resources is often a source of conflict.
- Possible pay cuts and overtime.

#### Different values and perceptions

The different beliefs of people, in terms of goals, ways, rules, procedures, means, standards, techniques, are another cause of conflict in ICUs.

#### Organizational weaknesses

Poor analysis of the overall objectives in the individual objectives of the ICU departments, unclear separation of roles and tasks, lack of coordination and information procedures, often lead to conflict.

#### Ineffective communication

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### Conflict management strategies

#### Damage to both sides

The logic of this strategy is to resolve the conflict to the detriment of both parties to the conflict.

In this case, each side remains steadfast in its position without negotiating or giving in to anything.

#### Basic handling strategies in this category are:

- **Compromise:** The differences between the two sides are maintained, but they are obliged to a middle compromise solution.
- **Arbitration:** The conflict is resolved through the mediation of the team leader or a third person, who mediates trying to resolve the differences “by taking and giving” to both parties.
- **Regulations:** It is the establishment and implementation of specific and detailed rules of conduct for the automatic resolution of conflicts, whenever they occur.
- **Avoidance:** In cases where conflicts can be predicted, they are avoided by physically separating the potential parties involved and eliminating or reducing their operational relationships.
- **Corruption:** The conflict is resolved with the remuneration of one of the conflicting parties, in order to modify his/ her behavior. This reward assumes the meaning of bribery.

#### Profit for one side and loss for the other

- It is an expression of intense competition, where the difference is resolved with the predominance of the strong side.
- Often, this “resolves” controversies between boss - subordinate, curator - director.
- Significant advantages are the incentives developed by the competition to make a greater effort, as well as to strengthen the cohesion of the team in conflict.
- At the same time, however, communication is disrupted, secrecy develops between the conflicting parties, and the behavior of the conflicting parties has a very negative effect on the ICU and its overall effectiveness.

#### Profit for both sides

- This is the most effective conflict management strategy.
- It is a process of cooperation and negotiation in which the causes of the conflict are sought to be eliminated and the maximum possible meeting the goals and needs of the conflicting parties. The process that develops is the substantial, direct, open and honest communication of the two sides, in order to understand the common goal and the interdependence of the conflicting parties, to eliminate the misunderstandings and to identify the possibilities of simultaneous satisfaction of the goals and needs of all parties that involved.

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