

# Communication Skills of Emergency Nurses and Their Effect on Patient Safety

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## ABSTRACT

Effective communication is a fundamental competency for emergency nurses, directly influencing patient safety, care quality, and clinical outcomes. Emergency departments are high-pressure environments where rapid decision-making, accurate information transfer, and collaboration among healthcare professionals are critical. Miscommunication can lead to medical errors, compromised patient safety, and decreased patient satisfaction, highlighting the essential role of nurses' communication skills. This paper explores the theoretical frameworks, factors influencing communication, and practical strategies that enhance communication effectiveness in emergency nursing. Emphasis is placed on verbal, non-verbal, and written communication, patient education, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the use of structured protocols such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation). Evidence from recent studies indicates that communication training, continuous professional development, and organizational support significantly improve patient outcomes and reduce errors. Recommendations include implementing standardized communication protocols, fostering teamwork, involving patients in care decisions, and utilizing technology to support accurate information transfer. By strengthening communication competencies, emergency nurses contribute to safer, patient-centered, and high-quality care. This study underscores that communication is not merely a professional skill but a critical determinant of patient safety and overall healthcare effectiveness in emergency settings.

## **1. Introduction**

Communication is a fundamental component of effective nursing practice, playing a critical role in patient safety, quality of care, and overall healthcare outcomes. In emergency departments, nurses face unique challenges, including rapid patient turnover, high-stress situations, unpredictable medical emergencies, and complex treatment protocols. In such high-pressure environments, the ability to communicate clearly, accurately, and promptly is essential not only for providing efficient care but also for preventing medical errors and adverse events. (Tuohy & Wallace, 2024)

Emergency nurses serve as key intermediaries between patients, families, and the multidisciplinary healthcare team. Their communication skills directly impact clinical decision-making, coordination of care, and patient satisfaction. Effective communication involves verbal and non-verbal interactions, active listening, empathy, and cultural sensitivity. It also requires the capacity to convey critical information under time constraints, manage conflicts, and adapt to diverse patient needs. (Bahari et al., 2024)

Studies indicate that poor communication is a leading contributor to sentinel events and preventable errors in healthcare settings. Interruptions, workload pressures, and interprofessional dynamics often exacerbate these challenges, highlighting the need for structured interventions and continuous professional development. By strengthening communication competencies, emergency nurses can foster teamwork, enhance patient trust, reduce misunderstandings, and promote safer healthcare environments. (Tuohy & Wallace, 2024)

This study explores the relationship between the communication skills of emergency nurses and patient safety outcomes. It emphasizes the importance of identifying effective strategies, training programs, and policies to enhance communication practices in emergency care. Ultimately, improving communication in emergency nursing is a critical step toward ensuring safer, more efficient, and patient-centered care in fast-paced clinical settings.

### **1.2 Background of the Topic**

The emergency department (ED) is a dynamic, fast-paced healthcare environment where nurses must manage multiple patients with varying levels of urgency and complexity. Effective communication in such settings is critical for ensuring patient safety, coordinating care, and minimizing errors. Miscommunication, delays in information exchange, and incomplete handoffs are among the most common causes of adverse events in hospitals, making communication a priority area for patient safety initiatives. (Bahari et al., 2024)

Emergency nurses act as central figures in patient care, bridging gaps between physicians, support staff, patients, and families. Their communication skills directly influence the accuracy of information transfer, timely interventions, and patient adherence to medical instructions. Furthermore, emergency nurses often encounter emotionally distressed patients and families, requiring a combination of empathy, active listening, and clarity to provide both emotional support and critical health information. (Tuohy & Wallace, 2024)

Despite the recognized importance of communication, research highlights persistent challenges in emergency nursing. High patient volumes, frequent interruptions, complex interprofessional interactions, and the necessity for rapid decision-making contribute to communication breakdowns. Additionally, cultural, linguistic, and educational differences between patients and healthcare providers can further complicate effective communication. (Al Kalaldehy, Amro, Qtait, & Alwawi, 2020)

Over the past decades, studies have increasingly emphasized the link between nurses' communication competence and patient safety outcomes. Evidence suggests that structured communication training, standardized handoff protocols, and teamwork-focused interventions can reduce errors, improve patient satisfaction, and enhance clinical outcomes. Understanding the background of communication challenges in emergency nursing provides the foundation for developing practical strategies to strengthen communication skills and improve patient safety across emergency care settings.

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

Effective communication is a critical determinant of patient safety in emergency departments, yet numerous studies indicate that communication failures remain a leading cause of medical errors and adverse events. Emergency nurses operate in high-pressure, fast-paced environments where rapid decision-making, accurate information exchange, and coordinated teamwork are essential. However, interruptions, high patient volumes, complex interprofessional interactions, and insufficient communication training often compromise the quality of information transfer, leading to misunderstandings, delays, and preventable errors. (Bahari et al., 2024)

The consequences of poor communication are significant, ranging from minor clinical misunderstandings to severe medical complications and even fatalities. Miscommunication can result in medication errors, incorrect treatment plans, delayed interventions, and compromised patient trust and satisfaction. Furthermore, emotional stress, cultural differences, and language barriers between patients and healthcare providers add layers of complexity to the communication process, making it more difficult to maintain accuracy and clarity under pressure. (Castro, 2021)

Despite recognition of these challenges, there is limited systematic research exploring the direct relationship between emergency nurses' communication skills and patient safety outcomes. Many healthcare institutions lack structured programs or evidence-based interventions designed to enhance communication competencies specifically in emergency care settings. Addressing this gap is essential for improving care quality, minimizing preventable errors, and fostering a safer healthcare environment. (Al Kalaldehy, Amro, Qtait, & Alwawi, 2020) This study aims to identify and analyze the impact of emergency nurses' communication skills on patient safety, highlighting both the challenges and potential strategies for improvement. By focusing on this issue, the research seeks to provide practical recommendations for training, policy development, and clinical practice to strengthen communication and enhance safety in emergency departments.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to improve patient safety and care quality in emergency departments by addressing communication challenges among nurses. Communication failures in emergency settings are a major contributor to medical errors, adverse events, and decreased patient satisfaction. By investigating the relationship between emergency nurses' communication skills and patient safety outcomes, this study provides valuable insights into one of the most critical factors affecting clinical performance in high-pressure healthcare environments. (Tuohy & Wallace, 2024)

Understanding the impact of effective communication enables healthcare institutions to design targeted interventions, training programs, and policies that strengthen nurses' competencies in verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, empathy, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Enhancing these skills not only reduces preventable errors but also promotes teamwork, improves patient adherence to treatment plans, and fosters trust between patients and healthcare providers. (Al Kalaldehy, Amro, Qtait, & Alwawi, 2020)

Additionally, this study emphasizes the broader implications for healthcare systems, including improved resource utilization, decreased hospital readmissions, and enhanced overall efficiency. As emergency departments face increasing patient volumes and complexity of care, ensuring that nurses possess strong communication skills becomes essential for maintaining safety and quality standards. (Castro, 2021)

Ultimately, the findings of this research can guide nursing educators, hospital administrators, and policymakers in implementing evidence-based strategies to strengthen communication practices. By doing so, healthcare systems can enhance patient safety, reduce the incidence of medical errors, and provide a higher standard of care in emergency settings.

#### **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the communication skills of emergency nurses and patient safety outcomes in emergency departments. Effective communication is essential for accurate information exchange, coordinated teamwork, and timely clinical decision-making, all of which are critical for preventing medical errors and adverse events. By investigating how communication competencies influence patient safety, this study aims to identify specific areas where improvement is needed and propose strategies to enhance nursing practice.

Additionally, the study seeks to explore the factors that facilitate or hinder effective communication among emergency nurses, including workload pressures, interruptions, interprofessional interactions, and cultural or linguistic barriers. Understanding these factors provides a comprehensive perspective on the challenges faced by nurses in fast-paced emergency settings and highlights the necessity for targeted interventions and professional development programs.

The study also aims to provide practical recommendations for healthcare administrators, nursing educators, and policymakers. These recommendations may include evidence-based training programs, structured communication protocols, and strategies to foster a culture of safety and teamwork in emergency departments. By achieving these objectives, the research aspires to enhance patient care quality, reduce preventable errors,

improve patient satisfaction, and strengthen overall healthcare system efficiency.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study is to demonstrate that improving emergency nurses' communication skills is a vital component of patient safety initiatives and a key factor in promoting safer, more effective, and patient-centered care in emergency healthcare settings.

## **2. Body of paper**

The main body of this paper explores the critical role of communication skills among emergency nurses and their direct impact on patient safety. It examines theoretical frameworks, evidence from current research, and practical strategies that can enhance communication competence in high-pressure emergency settings. Key aspects include verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, empathy, interprofessional collaboration, and standardized protocols for information exchange. By analyzing these factors, the paper highlights the challenges faced by emergency nurses, the consequences of communication failures, and the potential interventions to improve patient outcomes and ensure safer care delivery. (Castro, 2021)

### **2.1 Research Method**

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical research design to examine the relationship between emergency nurses' communication skills and patient safety outcomes in emergency departments. A mixed-methods approach is employed, combining quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue. (Castro, 2021)

The quantitative component involves a structured survey distributed to emergency nurses working in hospitals of varying sizes and levels of complexity. The survey includes validated instruments to measure communication competencies, such as clarity, active listening, empathy, and interprofessional collaboration, as well as self-reported observations of patient safety incidents and near-miss events. Demographic data, such as years of experience, educational background, and workload, are also collected to assess potential correlations. (Pytel, 2009)

The qualitative component involves semi-structured interviews with a selected group of emergency nurses and nurse managers to explore perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to communication in emergency settings. Themes such as barriers to effective communication, strategies for improvement, and the impact of organizational culture are analyzed to complement the quantitative findings. (Castro, 2021)

Data analysis includes statistical techniques, such as correlation and regression analysis, to identify relationships between communication skills and patient safety outcomes. Qualitative data are analyzed using thematic content analysis to capture the depth and nuance of nurses' experiences. (Wardahni, 2024)

Ethical considerations are strictly observed throughout the study, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods ensures a robust and multidimensional understanding of how communication skills affect patient safety, providing actionable insights for improving nursing practice in emergency departments. (Tuohy & Wallace, 2024)

### **2.2 Literature Review**

Communication is widely recognized as a fundamental factor influencing patient safety, particularly in high-pressure environments such as emergency departments. Multiple studies have highlighted that poor communication among healthcare professionals is a leading cause of medical errors, sentinel events, and adverse patient outcomes. Emergency nurses, who serve as central coordinators between patients, families, and interdisciplinary healthcare teams, are particularly critical in maintaining effective communication pathways. (Pytel, 2009)

Research indicates that effective communication encompasses not only verbal clarity but also non-verbal cues, active listening, empathy, cultural competence, and the ability to convey critical information under time constraints. For example, studies have demonstrated that structured communication tools, such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation), significantly reduce errors and improve information transfer during handoffs and patient transitions. Similarly, training programs focused on teamwork, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills enhance nurses' communication effectiveness and overall patient safety outcomes. (Castro, 2021)

Challenges to effective communication in emergency settings are consistently reported in the literature. High patient volumes, frequent interruptions, unpredictable medical emergencies, and interprofessional tensions contribute to communication breakdowns. Additionally, language barriers, varying health literacy levels among

patients, and cultural differences can complicate interactions and increase the likelihood of errors. Studies suggest that continuous professional development, organizational support, and evidence-based interventions are essential to mitigate these challenges. (Wardahni, 2024)

Overall, the literature underscores a clear link between emergency nurses' communication competencies and patient safety. Effective communication not only reduces preventable errors but also improves patient satisfaction, fosters trust, and strengthens collaborative care. This review highlights the need for targeted strategies and policies to enhance communication skills, thereby promoting safer and more efficient healthcare delivery in emergency departments.

### **3. Proposed Key Sections for the Article: An Overview**

This section provides a concise overview of the key components that structure the article. It outlines the major themes and focus areas, including the theoretical framework, communication skills of emergency nurses, factors influencing effective communication, and the impact on patient safety. Additionally, it highlights strategies, interventions, and recommendations aimed at improving communication practices in emergency care settings. The overview serves as a roadmap, guiding readers through the main topics and illustrating how each section contributes to understanding and enhancing patient safety through improved nursing communication. (Al Haliq & AlShammari, 2025)

#### **3.1 Theoretical Framework of Emergency Nursing**

The practice of emergency nursing is grounded in a combination of theoretical models and conceptual frameworks that guide clinical decision-making, patient assessment, and care delivery. Emergency nurses operate in dynamic, high-pressure environments where rapid decisions and precise interventions are essential. Theoretical frameworks provide a structured approach to understanding patient needs, prioritizing care, and integrating communication strategies into everyday practice. (Shin & Yoo, 2023)

One of the central frameworks in emergency nursing emphasizes the holistic assessment of patients, considering not only physical health but also psychological, social, and cultural factors. This approach allows nurses to recognize potential risks, anticipate complications, and implement preventive measures that enhance patient safety. Communication theory also plays a critical role, highlighting the importance of clear, concise, and empathetic interactions between nurses, patients, families, and other healthcare professionals. (Al Haliq & AlShammari, 2025)

Models such as the Nursing Process, the Patient-Centered Care Model, and frameworks for interprofessional collaboration provide practical guidance for emergency nurses. These frameworks emphasize the integration of assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation while fostering teamwork, shared decision-making, and continuous communication. By applying these theoretical principles, emergency nurses can enhance clinical outcomes, reduce errors, and support patient-centered, safe, and effective care. (Cruchinho, 2025)

In addition, evidence-based practice is closely linked to theoretical frameworks, enabling nurses to apply research findings to clinical scenarios and improve both the quality and safety of care. Understanding and utilizing these frameworks allows emergency nurses to navigate complex clinical environments, respond effectively to emergent situations, and maintain high standards of professional practice.

#### **3.2 Communication Skills of Emergency Nurses and Their Role in Clinical Practice**

Communication is one of the most critical competencies for emergency nurses, directly influencing patient safety, quality of care, and overall healthcare outcomes. In the fast-paced environment of emergency departments, nurses must convey information clearly and accurately to patients, families,

and other healthcare professionals. Effective communication ensures that critical information regarding patient conditions, treatment plans, and potential risks is understood and acted upon promptly. (Shin & Yoo, 2023)

Emergency nurses utilize a combination of verbal, non-verbal, and written communication skills. Verbal communication includes the use of clear, concise language, active listening, and questioning techniques to gather and share information accurately. Non-verbal communication, such as body language, eye contact, and tone of voice, complements verbal interactions and helps convey empathy, reassurance, and professionalism. Written communication, including documentation, handoffs, and electronic health records, ensures continuity of care and provides a legal record of nursing interventions. (Al Haliq & AlShammari, 2025)

Effective communication extends beyond basic information transfer; it encompasses patient education, advocacy, and collaboration within multidisciplinary teams. Emergency nurses educate patients and families about medical procedures, medications, and follow-up care, promoting adherence and reducing anxiety. They also act as patient advocates, ensuring that patient needs, preferences, and concerns are clearly communicated to physicians and other healthcare providers. (Cruchinho, 2025)

Research shows that strong communication skills among emergency nurses lead to improved clinical outcomes, enhanced patient satisfaction, reduced errors, and better teamwork. Conversely, communication failures are consistently linked to adverse events, medication errors, and compromised patient safety. In practice, emergency nurses must balance rapid decision-making with clear, empathetic communication, often under stressful and time-sensitive conditions. (Shin & Yoo, 2023)

Continuous professional development, training in communication strategies, and adherence to standardized communication protocols, such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation), are essential to enhance nurses' competencies. By mastering these skills, emergency nurses contribute significantly to safe, patient-centered care and foster an environment of trust, collaboration, and efficiency in emergency healthcare settings. (Bahari et al., 2024)

**3.3 Impact of Emergency Nurses' Communication on Patient Safety and Care Quality** Effective communication by emergency nurses plays a crucial role in ensuring patient safety and maintaining high-quality care in emergency departments. The fast-paced and often unpredictable nature of emergency care increases the risk of errors, misunderstandings, and adverse events. In this context, nurses' ability to communicate clearly and accurately with patients, families, and the healthcare team directly affects the outcomes of care. (Shin & Yoo, 2023)

Studies have shown that miscommunication is one of the leading causes of medical errors, including medication mistakes, incorrect procedures, delayed interventions, and incomplete handoffs. Emergency nurses serve as a vital link between patients and other healthcare professionals, ensuring that critical information is conveyed promptly and accurately. Effective communication helps prevent errors by confirming patient information, clarifying treatment plans, and coordinating care activities. (Cruchinho, 2025)

Beyond error prevention, communication skills influence the overall quality of care. Nurses' ability to educate patients, provide emotional support, and involve patients in decision-making contributes to higher patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment plans. Empathy, active listening, and culturally sensitive communication further enhance patient trust and engagement. Strong communication within interdisciplinary teams also improves collaboration, reduces workplace stress, and fosters a more organized and efficient care environment. (Al Haliq & AlShammari, 2025)

The implementation of standardized communication protocols, such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation), structured handoffs, and team briefings, has been shown to enhance both patient safety and care quality. Training programs focused on communication skills, conflict resolution, and teamwork further empower nurses to navigate complex clinical situations effectively. (Bahari et al., 2024)

In summary, the communication competencies of emergency nurses are a fundamental determinant of patient safety and care quality.

### **3.4 Proposed Nursing Strategies and Recommendations for Improving Communication and Enhancing Patient Safety**

Improving communication in emergency nursing is essential for enhancing patient safety, reducing errors, and providing high-quality care. The following strategies and recommendations focus on actionable steps that can strengthen nurses' communication skills in fast-paced clinical settings:

#### **1. Implementation of Standardized Communication Protocols**

Using structured communication tools, such as SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation), can ensure consistency and clarity in verbal and written exchanges. These protocols reduce misunderstandings during handoffs, shift changes, and critical situations, promoting accurate information transfer among the healthcare team.

#### **2. Regular Communication Skills Training**

Emergency nurses benefit from continuous professional development programs that focus on verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, conflict resolution, and patient education. Simulation-based training and role-playing exercises allow nurses to practice real-life scenarios and improve their responsiveness under stress.

#### **3. Teamwork and Interprofessional Collaboration**

Encouraging a collaborative environment where nurses, physicians, and allied healthcare professionals communicate openly fosters mutual understanding and coordinated care. Team briefings, debriefings, and interdisciplinary meetings enhance situational awareness and reduce errors caused by miscommunication.

#### **4. Patient-Centered Communication**

Nurses should actively involve patients and families in care decisions, providing clear explanations of procedures, medications, and follow-up instructions. Using culturally sensitive language and adapting communication to patients' literacy levels ensures understanding and adherence, ultimately improving safety and satisfaction.

#### **5. Utilization of Technology**

Electronic health records (EHRs), computerized handoff tools, and secure messaging systems can support timely and accurate information sharing. Integrating these technologies into daily practice minimizes gaps in communication and ensures that critical data is accessible to all team members.

#### **6. Organizational Support and Policies**

Healthcare institutions should establish policies that prioritize communication as a key aspect of patient safety. This includes minimizing unnecessary interruptions, maintaining adequate staffing levels, and promoting a culture that encourages reporting and learning from communication-related errors.

#### **7. Continuous Evaluation and Feedback**

Regular assessment of communication practices through audits, peer feedback, and patient satisfaction surveys allows nurses to identify areas for improvement. Constructive feedback and ongoing evaluation help maintain high standards of communication and ensure patient safety.

By implementing these strategies, emergency nurses can enhance their communication skills, reduce preventable errors, strengthen patient trust, and contribute to safer and more effective care environments.

## **4. Conclusion**

Effective communication is a foundational element in emergency nursing that directly influences patient safety, quality of care, and overall clinical outcomes. Emergency nurses operate in high-pressure, fast-paced environments where accurate information transfer, timely decision-making, and coordinated teamwork are critical. As this study demonstrates, deficiencies in communication can lead to misunderstandings, preventable errors, and adverse events, whereas strong communication skills enhance patient outcomes, satisfaction, and trust.

The theoretical frameworks, literature, and practical strategies reviewed in this paper highlight the multifaceted role of communication in emergency nursing. Nurses' verbal, non-verbal, and written communication, combined with empathy, active listening, and cultural sensitivity, serve as key tools for patient-centered care. Standardized communication protocols, ongoing professional development, teamwork, and organizational support further strengthen communication competencies and foster safer care environments.

This study underscores the need for healthcare institutions to prioritize communication as an integral component of patient safety initiatives. By implementing structured training programs, supportive policies, and evidence-based strategies, emergency nurses can enhance their communication skills, reduce preventable errors, and

promote efficient, safe, and high-quality care.

In conclusion, effective communication in emergency nursing is not merely a professional skill but a critical determinant of patient safety and care quality. Fostering communication competencies through education, policy, and practice improvement is essential to ensuring that emergency departments can provide safe, patient-centered, and efficient care in the challenging and dynamic healthcare landscape.

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