Module 5
Conflict Resolution

Adapted from The Ottawa Hospital Inter-Professional Model of Patient Care©
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In This Module:

- What is conflict?
- What are the major factors that influence conflict?
- What are the major causes of conflict?
- How to recognize and address horizontal hostility
- Strategies to Prevent, Reduce, Address Conflict
Has Conflict Ever Created a Negative Experience for Your Team?

• Recall a negative team experience...a work team, a committee, a sports team or any other group to which you have belonged to or led.

• Share your stories and discuss...
  • Why your experience was negative.
  • And, how could it have been different.
Definition of Conflict

con·flict  (kän-flikt\)*

1. Fight, battle, war
2. (a) Competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action
   (b) Mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands
3. The opposition of persons or forces that gives rise to dramatic action in a drama or fiction

*Webster’s dictionary
What is Conflict?

- One of the most productive forms of collaboration when used constructively.
- Can be an opportunity to deepen understanding and agreement.
- Arises because of people’s reactions to the circumstances or actions of others.
Consequences of Conflict

- Impact on patient outcomes
- Impact on physical and emotional health
- Impact on relationships with family and friends
- Impact on recruitment and retention
Factors that Influence Conflict

- Gender
- Age
- Hierarchies
- Culture
- Organizational Factors
Gender

• Men and women communicate differently, and can handle conflict in different ways.
• Conflict may also arise when there are stereotypes of how a man or woman is “supposed” to act.
Age

GREETING, TROGLODYTES. 
I AM FROM THE MILLENNIUM GENERATION.

I WAS FORGED IN THE 
DIGITAL AGE. I WILL 
USE MY KNOWLEDGE OF 
MYSPACE.COM AND 
YOUTUBE AND E-MAIL 
TO RULE THIS PLANET.

BUWHAA-HAAAA!!!

WOW, YOU'RE RIGHT. 
HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH 
UPPER BODY STRENGTH.

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Hierarchies

Hierarchies can develop:

- Between Leaders/Managers and Health Care Professionals
- Between Professions
- Within Professions
Cultural

- Cultural differences may play a role not only in how conflict is perceived, or what may offend, but also in how people respond to conflict
- Reactions may be culturally based and motivated
- Cultural sensitivity is required
Organizational

• There are spoken and unspoken “rules” in organizations
• The manner in which people are treated needs to be reflected and practiced from the top down
• The workplace needs to decide what it will and will not accept.
• There needs to be a lived, not just a stated culture of what behaviours are valued and tolerated.
Major Causes of Conflict

- Internal needs of the team
- Demands of external environment
- Quality of leadership
Causes of Conflict

- Causes of Relationship Conflicts:
  1. Miscommunication.
  2. Strong emotions.
  3. Stereotyping.
  4. Repetitive negative behavior.

- Causes of Value Conflicts:
  1. Different ways of life, ideology, worldview, etc.
  2. Different criteria for evaluating ideas.

- Causes of Data Conflicts:
  1. Lack of information.
  2. Misinformation.
  3. Differing views on data’s relevance.
  4. Different interpretations of data.

- Causes of Structural Conflicts:
  1. Unequal authority.
  2. Unequal control of resources.
  3. Time constraints.

- Causes of Interest Conflicts:
  1. Perceived or actual competition over interests.
  2. Procedural interests.
  3. Psychological interests.
What Lies Beneath.....

Can cause... conflict for a Team!
"When people go to work, they shouldn't have to leave their hearts at home".

Author: Betty Bender
Aggression and Hostility in the Workplace
What are the potential conflicts or hostile situations that you encounter within your day?
Hostile behaviours

Overt:
• Name-calling
• Bickering
• Fault-finding
• Backstabbing
• Criticism
• Intimidation
• Gossip
• Shouting

Covert:
• Unfair assignments
• Sarcasm
• Eye-rolling
• Ignoring
• Refusing to help
• Sighing
• Refusing to work with someone
• Isolation
What is the prevalence of workplace hostility?

- 45% Not seen/Not been
- 13% Now Witnessed
- 24% Been Bullied
- 12% Witnessed

WBI survey 2007
Scenario

Heather, a Registered Practical Nurse, works in a day surgery clinic and loves her job. However, she dislikes her hostile working environment. Everyday, she and others experience verbal abuse from the Clinical Manager. Today, when she returned from a scheduled break, she was grabbed by the arm and shouted at by the Clinical Manager to get back to work. This particular Clinical Manager is routinely verbally abusive to her staff, denies them vacation time and regularly belittles their skills, the team’s efficiency, and the quality of care being provided.
The Impact of Hostility...

• Individual

• Organizational

• Financial
Organizational and Financial Impact

Unhealthy Workplace

Work-related stress

→

↑Turnover
↑Litigation
↓Employee satisfaction
↓Employee commitment
↑Absenteeism
↑Health insurance claims
↑Short & long-term disability
↑Depression
↑Accidents

↓Productivity

↑Costs

Encourages

Unhealthy Lifestyle practices

Adapted from The Business Case for a Healthy Workplace (2007)
“In the societies of the highly industrialized western world, the workplace is the only remaining battlefield where people can ‘kill’ each other without running the risk of being taken to court.”

Heinz Leymann, MD
Theory Behind Hostility
Insights from the Animal Kingdom
Why is Horizontal Hostility so Virulent?

- Denial
- Hostility’s visibility
- Ineffective supervisor intervention
- Lack of confrontation skills
- Intermittent reinforcement
- Pressure relief
Root Cause of Hostility
Intrinsic Factors

- Emotional state
- Personality style
- Beliefs and expectations
- Inadequate communication and conflict resolution skills
Extrinsic Factors

- Violent workplace
- Poor colleague relationships
- Task and time imperatives - work complexity
- Demands for efficiency and productivity
- Culture
Organizational Context
Best Practices to Eliminate Hostility

• Levelling the playing field
• Empowering staff by increasing voice
• Raising awareness
• Increasing self-esteem
• Creating an open communication network
• Providing opportunities for reflection
• Increasing social support networks
• Illuminating the problem by bringing the consequences into the open.
Nurturing our Young
Managerial and/or Leader Response
Organizational Opportunities
Holding Staff and Colleagues Accountable is a Bedrock of Quality Care

A physiotherapist reports an unacceptable behaviour to his Professional Leader…

…and, horizontal hostility becomes the culture.
What you can do...

→ The importance of Social Capital
Work Shouldn’t Hurt!
Food for thought...

• The more productive we are, the less time we have to bond and network with each other.
• How can we create a healing environment for our patients, when we are backstabbing and gossiping about one another?
• The first step in eliminating horizontal hostility involves assessing the role we each play in ending or perpetuating the behaviour within our workplace.
Conflict Management and Resolution
Five Approaches Used to Address Conflict

- Avoidance
- Accommodation
- Compromise
- Competition
- Collaboration

(Thomas & Kilman, 1976)
Avoidance

• Avoiding or postponing conflict through measures such as ignoring it or changing the subject

• Avoidance can be useful as a temporary measure to buy time or as an expedient means of dealing with very minor, non-recurring conflicts.

• In more severe cases, conflict avoidance can involve severing a relationship or leaving a group
Accommodation

• Surrendering one’s own needs/wishes to accommodate the other party

• Belief that conflict should be avoided in favour of harmony and that people cannot discuss conflict without damaging relationships

• Belief that preservation of the relationship is most important factor
Compromise

• Finding a middle ground in which each party is partially satisfied

• Give up part of one’s goals and persuade the other person in a conflict to give up part of his/her goals.

• To seek a conflict solution in which both sides gain something – the middle ground between two extreme positions.
Competition

• Asserting one’s viewpoint at the potential expense of another

• Attempt to “win” by attacking, overpowering, overwhelming, and intimidating others

• Competition can be useful when achieving one’s objectives outweighs one’s concern for the relationship
Collaboration

• Working together to find a mutually beneficial solution

• Sees conflict as a means of improving relationships by reducing tension between two persons
What is Your Conflict Management Style?
Tips to Aid Conflict Resolution

• Proaction
• Communication
• Openness
• Research
• Flexibility
Personal Techniques For Conflict Resolution

- Paraphrasing
- Reflective listening
- Summarizing
- Questioning
Question Types

- Open-ended
- Dichotomous
- Specific
- Probing
Use with Caution!

- Double-barreled questions
- “Why” questions
- Dichotomous questions
- Leading questions
Strategies to Prevent, Decrease or Address Conflict

• Accept that conflict is normal
• Develop a process to review decisions
• Provide opportunity for team members to develop knowledge about others’ roles
• Support each professional’s autonomy
• Examine overlapping roles and negotiate role assignments
Strategies to Prevent, Decrease or Address Conflict

- Improve inter-professional team skills
- Set up a structure to ensure reflective appraisal
- Create a climate of freedom to be different, to express feelings about differences and to define reality of conflict
- Acknowledge that conflict management skills are as valuable as clinical capabilities
Reflections on Conflict...
SBI

The SBI Model is a thorough process of providing feedback. It involves having a dialogue with another person.

- **S**: Situation - Describe the SITUATION during which the behaviour occurred. Identify the specific situation, where it took place, what else was going on.

- **B**: Behaviour - Describe the BEHAVIOUR. Be factual and specific.

- **I**: Impact - Describe the IMPACT of the behaviour from your perspective. Describe how it affected you or how you perceive it affected others.
SBAR
A method of communication of issues, problems or opportunities of improvement to coworkers or supervisors. Can be applied to both verbal and nonverbal communication

- **S**: Situation- State what is happening at the present time that has warranted the SBAR communication
- **B**: Background- Explain circumstances leading up to situation; place in context
- **A**: Assessment- What do you think the problem is?
- **R**: Recommendation- What would you do to correct the problem
Dotmocracy

Dotmocracy is an established facilitation process for prioritizing ideas among a large number of people. It is a participatory and equal opportunity large group decision-making process.

Dotmocracy will:
• Engage and empower a diverse membership
• Give a voice to even the quietest of members
• Recognize and celebrate shared values
• Focus on solutions while avoiding traditional power dynamics
• Provide fully documented results that can be easily translated into action
Second Chances

• Has there ever been a situation at work where you have encountered conflict?
• How did you deal with it? Do you wish you could have handled it better?
• How would you have handled it? List strategies or communication techniques that you could have used
• Now role play the new scenario, using the new strategies. This is a “second chance” to handle the situation
Summary

- Conflict can be a negative or positive force on a team.
- When allowed to fester, conflict can destroy a team, and in turn, have poor outcomes for patient care.
- When used constructively, conflict can be one of the most productive forms of collaboration.
Questions?