Communication Among Multidisciplinary Team Members Treating Patients with Disorders of Consciousness Following Traumatic Brain Injury

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Research Question
How do clinicians perceive communicating with team members about patients in states of disordered consciousness (DoC)?

Background
- Patients with DoC following TBI present unique challenges for clinicians
- Unable to verbally communicate needs
- Uncertainty about prognosis
- Limited indicators of meaningful change
- Families of patients with DoC perceive patient to be more conscious than the clinicians

Communication and collaboration that include the caregiver perspective is central to providing person-centered care (PCC) [3]

Study Design
- Qualitative, exploratory design
- Narrative interviewing methodology [4]

Methods
- 11 rehabilitation clinicians working in post-acute rehabilitation settings with experience treating adults with DoC following severe TBI
- Participants include: Occupational, Physical, Speech, 
- Professional Therapists, Nursing, Psychology, Physicians, & Case Managers
- Thematic analysis is iterative, ongoing coding develops and adjusts the themes (NVivo 11 Plus)
- Cases of disagreement: team members discuss and re-code until consensus is reached.

Conceptual Framework
- Systems perspective [3, 5]
- Thematic & Constant comparative data tools to organize and analyze the data. [4, 6, 7]

Analysis
- Thematic & Comparative methods [6]
- Line by line open coding
- Examples of codes: 'collaborating with staff', creating rapport, 'discrepancy in interpretation', refusing admission, 'family tells clinician things'
- Open codes developed into axial codes (i.e. categories) that share a characteristic, pattern, theme
- Axial codes explicitly describe the open codes
- Examples of axial codes: Interpreters of Patient Responses, Patient becomes more aware
- Uncertainty arises when describing patient behaviors and recovery process during communication with team members
- Persistence and uncertainty affects the care plan
- Clinicians describe the challenge of capturing patient’s response when there is a discrepancy in interpretation and timing of patient’s communication

External Influences
- Health insurance
- Economics
- Political

Health Care System
- Medical Model, Lack of care for chronic conditions, care pathways

Rehabilitation Care
- Cross-disciplinary team members, relationships between & within disciplines, formal & informal communication

Organizational Culture
- Mission, Values, Resource Structure, Hierarchy vs. Heterarchy

Clinicians
- Individual training, philosophy, beliefs, worldview

Family
- Pre-injury relationship with patient & hope for recovery

Person with Disorders of Consciousness
- Etiology, personality, medical history

Theme: Uncertainty exists when describing patients’ behaviors and recovery process during communication with team members

Themes
- Communicating
- Patients
- Uncertainty

Case Studies
- \( \text{Clinicians to team members discussing the patient’s current condition and treatment progress.} \)
- \( \text{Clinicians express hospital visits as common, unpredictable events.} \)
- \( \text{Clinicians described the patient’s communication as inconsistent and not predictable.} \)
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Case Study
- \( \text{Clinicians describe the patient’s communication as ambiguous and varying.} \)
- \( \text{Clinicians perceived the patient’s behaviors and uncertainty in treatment.} \)

Discussion
- Theme of Uncertainty
- Fluctuation of behavior is common for this patient population
- Clinicians are uncertain about interpreting patient behaviors; they express frustration with communicating uncertainty to families and other team members
- Clinical assessments and their interpretations do not provide clarity on prognosis or diagnosis - (4-6 years of meaning change)
- The figure shows the multiple factors that can influence clinician communication within this healthcare delivery system

Future Directions
- New themes will emerge as more data are coded.
- Theme of uncertainty in health will facilitate future clinical trainings on effective communication to facilitate better patient outcomes
- Currently interviewing caregivers to understand their perceptions of this issue (communication).

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References

Examples of themes: 'clinical reasoning in the rehabilitation setting', 'communication to families about prognosis or diagnosis', 'Uncertainty in communication with family.

Thematic and Comparative methods [6]
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