

# Structured Communication Tools: DESC, CUS and SBAR

▶ Accelerating Change Transformation Team



- D** Describe
- E** Express
- S** Suggest
- C** Consequences

**Address interpersonal conflict and improve communication during difficult conversations.**

**Example: A nurse consistently interrupts the receptionist.**

**Describe:** When I am in the middle of a task and get interrupted, it causes confusion at reception.

**Express:** I feel stressed and flustered when this happens.

**Suggest:** Can we agree that non-urgent questions can wait until there's a break?

**Consequences:** This would help us both work more smoothly and reduce patient wait times. Are you open to trying this?

- C** Concerned
- U** Uncomfortable
- S** Safety Issue

**Escalate concerns in a clear and structured way to support patient safety.**

**Example: A nurse notices a potential dosing error during a busy day.**

**Concerned:** I am concerned the medication dosage entered for Mr. Lee seems unusual.

**Uncomfortable:** I am feeling uncomfortable proceeding because the dosage is not typical.

**Safety:** This is a safety issue as the patient could experience adverse effects. Can we check the prescription before it's finalized?

- S** Situation
- B** Background
- A** Assessment
- R** Recommendation

**Provide clear, concise information in clinical or time-sensitive situations.**

**Example: A nurse must notify the physician of a patient in an exam room experiencing worsening symptoms.**

**Situation:** Dr. Patel, I want to speak to you about Ms. Ramirez in room 4. She is experiencing increased shortness of breath.

**Background:** She has a diagnosis of COPD and worsening symptoms for the last two days. Today, her sats are at 88%.

**Assessment:** Breathing is laboured and she appears fatigued.

**Recommendation:** I recommend we help her take her inhaler and call an ambulance.