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Teamwork in the Central Service Department

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Define teamwork as it relates to the Central Service/Sterile Processing department
2. Discuss the importance of teamwork and servant leadership
3. Identify the three key components of a successful team

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T HE CENTRAL SERVICE/STERILE PROCESSING (CS/SP) DEPARTMENT plays a vital role in the delivery of quality healthcare services to the surgical team; therefore, it is essential for every CS/SP technician to understand not only his or her specific role within the process, but also the importance of working together as a team to achieve high standards in patient care and promote patient safety. Certified Instrument Specialists can play a key leadership role in this process.

OBJECTIVE 1: DEFINE TEAMWORK AS IT RELATES TO THE CENTRAL SERVICE/STERILE PROCESSING DEPARTMENT

The BusinessDictionary defines "teamwork" as the process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal. Teamwork within the CS/SP department, however, might be better defined as "CS/SP professionals who fulfill their specific roles in a collaborative manner, with a mutual respect of their team members within the process."

All team members, regardless of their title, tenure or experience level, must be encouraged to accept their roles within the collaborative process to perform at their highest levels and consistently achieve quality outcomes. Put simply, all team members must consistently and conscientiously work together each day to get the job done and ensure the job is performed safely, effectively, efficiently, and in accordance with standards, best practices, policies and procedures, and instructions for use.

OBJECTIVE 2: DISCUSS THE IMPORTANCE OF TEAM AND SERVANT LEADERSHIP

A person may serve as an effective leader and help promote teamwork without holding an official management title. Such individuals are considered "unofficial leaders" and they play a very important role on the CS team. Unofficial leaders are typically respected and followed by their coworkers. In recent years, the term "servant leadership" has become more widely used in many healthcare facilities, and a greater emphasis is being placed on its adoption and development. The practice of engaging in servant leadership is often viewed as personally and professionally rewarding for the individuals participating and for the team, as a whole.

Servant leadership focuses on supporting and developing individuals within a facility. This leadership style relies on empowerment, participatory management and quality outcomes. A servant leader focuses on the growth and

The focus of the teamwork process must always be on the work or task at hand. The task(s), roles that are assumed, and positive outcomes are more important than personality conflicts in the workplace that distract from the overall objectives of the department. It is important to have specific, defined roles for CS/SP technicians to help them carry out their duties and contribute to the overall flow of the department. The leader's expectations must also be clear and concise, and leave a clear path for success.

wellbeing of the collective team, with the belief that there is more power and value in serving others than in being served. Individuals who see themselves as leaders because they believe they know more and are wiser than others are not as willingly followed by members of the team as those who truly care about and are dedicated to their team members.

In a culture of teamwork, official or unofficial leaders who are unable to see the talent and potential of their respective team members will soon find themselves lacking the support of their team members – and a leader's insecurities may become evident by their actions and decisions.

Effective servant leadership requires the building of a strong foundation beneath all team members to help ensure the success of each individual and, ultimately, the entire team.

VIEWING TEAMWORK AS A PROCESS
For this lesson, teamwork is best defined as a process rather than simply a definition of "people working together to get the job done." Working together does not always translate to people standing next to each other while performing a task; instead, it should be perceived on a much broader scale. The teamwork process is a system that promotes collaborative relationships while team members fulfill their specific roles within the process (keeping in line with the goals and initiatives of the CS/SP department). The process must be articulated and understood, not just with co-workers on a particular shift, but also across all shifts and with other departments both within and outside the CS/SP department. Team vision is also paramount to the teamwork process; this vision helps ensure team members not only know the direction of where the CS/SP department is going, but also how the team can reach that goal/destination.

To work most effectively throughout the process, team leaders, including unofficial leaders, must have the knowledge, understanding and skills to coach team members. The best way a leader can foster engagement is to take a sincere interest in the team and, thereby, place each individual team member in a position to succeed. Moreover, challenges will surface along the teamwork path; therefore, leaders must take immediate action to direct the focus on the process, rather than the individual team member(s) who are having difficulty embracing the teamwork concept/process.

The focus of the teamwork process must always be on the work or task at hand. The task(s), roles that are assumed, and positive outcomes are more important than personality conflicts in the workplace that distract from the overall objectives of the department. It is important to have specific, defined roles for CS/SP technicians to help them carry out their duties and contribute to the overall flow of the department. The leader's expectations must also be clear and concise, and leave a clear path for success.

Conflict may arise during the growth and transition process, so it is important for leaders to provide an avenue for open communication on these issues, as well as their resolution. For example, when moments of conflict between team members arise, leaders must immediately intervene and coach the team members through conflict resolution exercises. Understanding team dynamics can equip team members with the proper tools to help navigate through communication barriers that may exist within the team. It is not always the best policy to separate team members who have some differing opinions. It is also important for leaders to recognize when team members come to them for counsel regarding mounting

tensions, to validate the team member's concern, and ensure team members are being heard and supported. Team members who demonstrate a disregard for working together and/or maintaining a positive work environment may require further coaching regarding effective communication and understanding how each team member's roles contribute to the collective team/process. Leaders should encourage their team members to perform their specific roles within the process properly and consistently.

Leaders must demonstrate the ability to effectively lead team members toward organizational objectives, goals and desired outcomes. Even with that ability, leaders will sometimes face challenges with the teamwork process. For example, when there is evidence of conflict between team members, those individuals should be allowed to resolve those issues amongst themselves. If this approach fails, however, leaders must intervene by evaluating the situation and then proceeding with the proper decision. The best approach is to strategically designate employees in roles that will promote collaboration and teamwork. If a team member resists working with or refuses to work with other team members, that resistant team member should be evaluated and reassigned to another area. Expectations must be clear and it should be understood that unacceptable conduct or behavior will not be tolerated.

Leaders must recognize unusual or unsatisfactory events and take the proper steps to alleviate tension amongst team members. Leaders must also have keen insight as to how to respond to challenging situations that require action and intervention. Additionally, leaders must understand the importance of their roles in the teamwork process. They should consistently articulate the team vision and apply the appropriate measures to keep team members on

course to achieve positive organizational outcomes, even throughout times of transition and change.

OBJECTIVE 3: IDENTIFY THE THREE KEY COMPONENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL TEAM

Three key components are necessary for any team to succeed and progress: open communication throughout the department, adherence to consistent policies and procedures, and commitment from every team member and leader.

Team members must be empowered to succeed through communication that is healthy, clear and well understood. Expectations must be understood, with each member understanding not only their respective roles within the process but also the importance of those roles and why they must be completed in a consistent, appropriate manner to obtain the department's desired outcomes. It is more essential for team members to understand their specific roles in the process and to work collaboratively than it is for them to get along with (or be friends with) every team member.

Failure to perform the expected roles within the process should never be tolerated; however, a leader may question how they can get the job done when team members are unwilling to work together. The answer lies in focusing on the team members' roles and their expectations in the process. The team members should be encouraged to perform their roles within the process to the best of their ability. The expectation is for them to understand their roles in the process and recognize how diversity functions within that process.

Diversity is the process of understanding team members' differences, but not allowing those differences to become barriers to the process. Diversity can enhance the process by establishing mutual respect

for co-workers, despite differences of opinion.

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is paramount to the success of any team. Open, healthy communication must be encouraged throughout the entire CS/SP department, and across all shifts. It is essential for leaders to engage in effective communication and serve as a positive example for the rest of the team. Poor communication can hamper employee morale and foster dissension and resentment amongst team members. The perception of such dissention and resentment alone can be detrimental.

Many departments have failed to incorporate clear, concise and consistent communication objectives. As a result, ongoing communication challenges arise, along with inconsistent outcomes from shift to shift and, perhaps, numerous errors within the process. A consistent flow of valuable information should be provided to the team on a regular basis. Daily shift huddles and weekly inservice team meetings are essential for fostering effective teamwork and a collaborative, communicative environment. These meetings provide the incoming shifts with pertinent information about the day's events (e.g., surgical cases completed or in progress, malfunctioning equipment, missing instrumentation, high-priority requests) and help the team members better prioritize and plan for their shift.

Effective communication nurtures consistent teamwork and enables the CS/SP team to embrace its commitment to collaborate effectively, deliver the highest quality healthcare services and promote patient safety.

CONSISTENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures should be consistently performed as written, with

no shortcuts or omissions. Once a policy or procedure is established, it should be properly inserviced, with the expectation that the process should be consistently followed by all members of the team. It is through consistent application that quality can be achieved and the CS/SP customer can expect a quality product each time it is received. Allowing even one team member to deviate from this process will not only undermine the team, but also the quality of the products and services delivered.

COMMITMENT TO THE PROCESS

Commitment to the process is similar in nature to consistently following policies and procedures; the difference is that when consistently following preset guidelines such as policies and procedures, the team is essentially following preset steps to achieve the goal. Commitment to the process also usually involves a strong sense of focus; however, it will be important to deliver on that focus to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, a person can declare they will be a straight A student and have every intention of achieving this goal, but without commitment to the process (studying, managing time effectively, etc.) the goal most likely will not be reached.

When a team member is committed to a process, that process will be diligently and consistently followed to achieve the acceptable results – with no excuses being made for failure to reach that goal. To achieve commitment to the process, all team members must fully understand the goal, and that goal must be tangible and make sense to the final outcome. For example, a goal of attaining 100% clean instruments in a set will never be achieved without establishing an actual process for reaching that goal (e.g., inspecting each instrument in accordance with policies and procedures, 100% of the time) – and ensuring the entire team is

Both official and unofficial leaders who are well trained and skilled in leadership and teamwork approaches can help promote effective communication and consistent collaboration, and the desire to work together toward established goals and quality initiatives. By allowing each team member to grow and develop and embracing the three components of teamwork, an effective team can be developed, a consistent process can be followed and established goals can be realized.

committed to the process/goal. Allowing a 95% instrument inspection rate will not achieve the stated goal. Team members must all be held accountable for following the process consistently, each and every time.

IN CONCLUSION

In today's busy, fast-paced CS/SP departments, a commitment to teamwork is vital to success. Communication, consistent application of departmental policies and procedures, and commitment to the process are all key aspects of a team's ability to consistently deliver quality products and services and promote positive patient outcomes.

Both official and unofficial leaders who are well trained and skilled in leadership and teamwork approaches can help promote effective communication and consistent collaboration, and the desire to work together toward established goals and quality initiatives. By allowing each team member to grow and develop, and by embracing the three components of teamwork, an effective team can be developed, a consistent process can be followed and established goals can be realized. ©

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CIS Self-Study Lesson Plan Quiz - Teamwork in the Central Service Department

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1. A general definition of "teamwork" is:
   a. Partnering with three or more individuals to work toward a common goal
   b. Collaboration between a dedicated leader and another individual
   c. Working with like-minded individuals to achieve a common goal
   d. The process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal.

2. Teamwork in Central Service/Sterile Processing can be defined as:
   a. Central Service/Sterile Processing professionals who fulfill their specific roles in a collaborative manner, with a mutual respect of their team members within the process
   b. Technicians who collaborate daily with other departments to accomplish a shared goal
   c. Two or more technicians who work together to achieve safety goals
   d. Employees working side-by-side on a specific task

3. Only official leaders (those with a management title) should lead a team.
   a. True
   b. False

4. Servant leadership is a style that:
   a. Involves mentoring a team member to become a leader
   b. Is often ineffective
   c. Relies on empowerment, participatory management and quality outcomes
   d. Should only be applied when the Central Service/Sterile Processing team is serving the Operating Room

5. Individuals who believe they are leaders because they are more knowledgeable than anyone else on the team:
   a. Are rarely seen in healthcare environments
   b. May lose support of their team members
   c. Usually see potential in every team member
   d. Are often promoted to director roles

6. Team members who demonstrate a disregard for working together and/or maintaining a positive work environment:
   a. May require further coaching to promote effective communication and a better understanding of how each person's roles contribute to the team
   b. Are typically new in the position
   c. Are typically led by inexperienced managers
   d. Both A and B

7. Team leaders:
   a. Must be able to coach team members to work together
   b. Should focus on the process more than the team members
   c. Should focus on the team members more than the process
   d. Are more successful when they have formal leadership training

8. When evidence of a conflict arises between team members, leaders should:
   a. Separate the team members immediately
   b. Allow the team members to attempt to resolve the issue on their own
   c. Document the incident in the employees' file
   d. Promptly intervene and determine the best solution for the team members

9. Team members should understand that unacceptable conduct or behavior:
   a. Will result in termination of employment
   b. Will lead to demotion
   c. Will never be tolerated
   d. None of the above

10. The three components of an effective team are:
    a. Team building, communication and leadership
    b. Leadership, collaboration and reaching desirable outcomes
    c. Diversity, high expectations and consistency
    d. Effective communication, consistent adherence to policies and procedures, and commitment to the process

11. Which of the following approaches can help provide a consistent flow of information to the team?
    a. Twice-weekly inservices for each shift
    b. Daily shift huddles
    c. Hourly interdepartmental staff updates
    d. Monthly offsite team-building events

12. Diversity is the process of:
    a. Following several leaders at one time
    b. Encouraging everyone to follow the same goals
    c. Understanding team members' differences
    d. All the above

13. Poor communication:
    a. Can diminish employee morale and foster resentment amongst team members
    b. Is rarely improved by an unofficial leader
    c. Should result in a prompt evaluation of the team's leader
    d. Should be expected in the busy and diverse healthcare environment

14. The department's policies and procedures:
    a. Often lead to tension amongst team members
    b. Should be evaluated once a month by the team
    c. Should be evaluated by the department's official leader
    d. Should be properly communicated and inserviced

15. A goal will never be achieved without establishing an actual process for reaching that goal.
    a. True
    b. False