

## UNIT V

### **5.1 PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

Communication systems in hospitals encompass intra-departmental intercom, telephone, paging (overhead & wireless), nurses' call, data communications, computerized visual display terminals, television, cable television and closed circuit television (CCTV), alarm system, central dictation, monitoring and the more recent telemedicine, teleconsulting, and so on.

The demand to provide more and more information at higher speeds is greater today than even before.

The field of communication is being improved constantly to meet the complex demand of communicating from person to person, person to machine, and machine to machine.

With the advancement and sophistication of communication technology and the development of new and complex systems of communication, hospitals increasingly need persons who are knowledgeable in the management of communication systems and skilled in handling them.

Planning adequately for communication services in these changing times is as important as planning and designing the hospitals itself and its services.

The ability to transmit messages – voice, video, print and data – in a quick and accurate manner depends on the ready availability of the hospital's communications network and facilities.

A system that anticipates frequent changes and growth allows for the control of rising costs and produces greater efficiency.

Instantaneous and reliable communication is crucial to hospitals. A slow response or missed communication is crucial to hospitals.

For example, a delay in issuing a cardiac emergency call or failure to reach a specialist on time may endanger life.

Poor communication can result in overall organizational inefficiency.

A tardy response or unfriendly attitude of the telephone operator may establish a negative image in the minds of the public.

Since the telephone operator is frequently the first contact of the caller with the hospital, how she responds to his calls sets the overall first impression of the hospital for him.

#### **5.1.1 Nature and Scope for Communication**

Communication is the process of passing messages from one mind to another.

The use of the word 'mind' is intended to imply the importance of conveying facts, ideas, emotions, opinions and all other types of instructions in such a way that they can be understood by the person receiving them.

A significant point about communication is that it always involves two people – a sender and a receiver.

In addition, whether the sender is an employee or a manager, he usually wants his receiver to accept his ideas and then to act upon it.

### 5.1.2 PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

Results are achieved in an organization through the process of communication.

If there is a proper system of communication in an organization, there will not be any misunderstanding and confusion.

Communication is needed not only by the managerial staff for discharging their duties efficiently, but also by the lowest employees to listen to the instructions of their supervisors and to perform their duties sincerely.

Proper communication is needed at every step and serves several purposes. It provides:

1. Information and understanding necessary for group work.
2. The attitudes necessary for motivation, co-operation, and job satisfaction.
3. Work satisfaction.
4. Assistance in decision-making because taking decision needs information.

A good communication system results in better patient-care and higher job satisfaction through better team-work.

### 5.1.3 PLANNING OF COMMUNICATION

Planning is an all pervasive and fundamental function of management.

It involves choosing the proper course of action from different alternatives. Similarly, communication is also a vital aspect of the managerial process.

In fact, the superior-subordinate relation cannot thrive without effective and meaningful communication.

Therefore, the planning of communication is essential to produce the desired result. The following are the essential steps in planning of communication:

5. **Know your objective.** What is it that you intend to accomplish by this communication? The sharper the focus, the better the result.
6. **Identify your audience.** It is necessary to know whom you are communicating with in order to select the proper language and the proper media.
7. **Determine your medium.** The method of communication will often determine the success of the communication. A decision must be made on how best to communicate the message.
8. **Tailor the communication** to fit the relationship between sender and receiver. The key to this element of effective communication is the relationship climate.

**9. Establish mutual interest.** Empathy, the ability to see the other person's point of view, is a priceless ingredient of the effective communication.

**10. Watch your timing.** This is critical to the effectiveness of the communication. It is important to decide who should receive the communication first.

**11. Measure results.** Has the desired response occurred?

#### **5.1.4 MODES OF COMMUNICATION**

There are various modes of communication.

##### **i) Notice Boards**

These can be an effective method of communication provided they are well located and attractive to look at.

The most important thing is that notices should be allowed to outlive their usefulness.

To this end, one person should be made responsible for putting up notices and for regularly removing those which have served their purpose.

##### **ii) House Magazine**

At first thought, the introduction of a house magazine may seem ambitious for an average-sized hospital in this country, but it can provide a platform for top management to communicate with its employees in informal and direct teams.

If intelligently used, it can be a method of creating team spirit and building mutual understanding among employees.

It can explain the policies of the management in simple words, it can remind the employees from time of the advantage of the various welfare schemes that operate for their benefit, it can show them how they fit into the organization; and it can make the employees feel pride in their hospital.

There are two types of house magazines – the news – bulletin type where in news and notes of topical interest are published and the proper magazine type where articles, poems and news all find a place.

The news bulletin easier to prepare and its cost is very low.

However, a full-fledged magazine is often preferable because it is an informal means by which management policy can be explained to the employees and at the same time it provides the employees the opportunity to contribute articles and poems so that they consider the magazine their own.

The editorial functions can be performed by the HRD (Human Resource Department) because even no medium sized hospital can employ an editor for this job.

If the magazine is to be a powerful moulder of opinion on relationships between the management and employees, the editor has to be a person enjoying the full confidence of the management.

He should be assisted by an advisory committee to collect news. The

magazine should be distributed free to all employees.

The distribution of the magazine through the members of the editorial board can bring the readers and the members of the editorial board close to each other, and this system is therefore preferable.

The magazine should be in the language known by the majority of the employees.

### **iii) Suggestion Scheme**

Suggestion schemes encourage employees' participation and help them to identify themselves with the organization, provided these schemes are properly administered.

The following factors should be taken into account for the success of this scheme:

1. A joint committee should be formed to operate the system promptly and efficiently.
2. Employees should be encouraged to give their suggestions about the problems of the organization.
3. Full information should be disseminated about the suggestions received.
4. A fair monetary or non-monetary reward should be given for useful suggestions. When such suggestions can result in real savings by reducing operating costs and efficient service to the patients there should be no hesitation on spending the money required for this implementation.

In addition to this, well-organized suggestion systems provide an excellent opportunity for upward communications and for developing a feeling of 'belonging' on the part of the employees.

### **iv) Meetings and Conferences**

Meetings and conferences are widely-used methods of communication.

The truly-effective conferences and meetings encourage two-way communication and involve a group of people putting forth their ideas and experiences.

Those meetings and conferences which do not allow free participation should be discouraged.

### **v) Hospital and Departmental Letters**

Letters sent from CEO of hospital or department head to employees are generally used in special circumstances, such as any change in hospital policy, salary scales, fringe benefits, etc.

Such letters should be addressed by name, instead of 'Sir', to an employee because letters addressed by name are more personal and therefore effective.

However, one must remember that CEO of a hospital should write such letters only when he has something of the utmost importance to communicate.

Another point to remember is that these letters should be brief and simple.

### **vi) E-mail**

The internet is a wonderful way to communicate.

Each and every organization finds it a perfect way to talk to its staff.

It is useful but also dangerous when staff wants to talk to each other during working hours.

As hospital employees work around the clock, those employees who work in PM and night shifts have no way to know what is going on in their hospital.

So, department heads need a way to rally those employees.

In particular, they need a way to build a corporate culture – that intangible something which binds employees together and teaches them to understand instinctively the defining qualities of the hospital and appropriate way to respond to any issue that confronts them.

The e-mail provides the means to do this.

Surprisingly, the idea of going through a secretary to an appointment has changed. New employees can send e-mails to anyone and expect a response.

It is very democratizing. New hospitals find all sorts of mundane tasks that can be done online with greater efficiency and less expense.

#### **vii) Personnel Policy Manuals**

Each and every employee in the hospital has a right to know the conditions under which he is working and the rules and regulations which govern his employment.

Sound HRM encourages the employees' maximum contribution towards the achievement of the objectives of the institution.

Personnel policy manuals should be designed to promote mutual understanding and co-operation so as to maximize the delivery of services in the hospital.

The institution must develop policies of employment, placement, promotion, fringe benefits, training and developments, grievance procedure, performance appraisal, etc. because these certainly have a great impact on employees.

The manual embodying these policies acts as an effective vehicle of formal communication.