Case Report

Magic mobile numbers can save lives: a step towards prompt and effective communication

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication is an important part of health care management. The current study brings forth the perspective of effective communication through the timely usage of key mobile number which actually saved the life of a critical patient in trauma centre of our setting. A patient 'X', 07 years old female child, case of severe Grade IV dog bite with complete avulsion of scalp and in an unconscious state was brought to the Advance Trauma Centre of PGIMER. She was requiring approximately 40,000 IU of immunoglobulin as a life saving measure on an urgent basis which as per the information by routine communication path of general surgery resident was not available in the hospital. The request involved multitude of challenges: The urgency of the life-saving serum at night time, the poor patient's unaffordability to procure the serum from outside which was amounting to approximately INR 20000 and above all the limited administrative financial power to senior resident hospital administration for INR 2000. In such a situation of crisis, the use of magic mobile number by the senior resident hospital administration proved to be miraculous. The immunoglobulin was arranged, given to the critically ill patient and actually saved her life. The case report establishes the importance of cross-checking, an important aspect of communication in healthcare management and the prompt use of a contact number from list of 10 contact numbers of the key officials who are manning the various hospital services available in the administrative control room. Though this is an era of telemedicine and *pima facie* it was a form of communication gap and a simple step involving prompt thinking in the right direction, going back and completing the loop of communication actually proved out to be life-saving. In the context of resource limited settings, if we can improve and innovate in our communication network within the existing hospital framework, it can save lives.

Keywords: Communication failure, Magic mobile numbers

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is an important part of health care management. In hospitals communication between health care workers accounts for the major part of the information flow.¹ In a study from developed countries it was reported that about 50 percent of information requests by doctors in hospitals were met by colleagues

rather than by other sources.² Now many evidence indicates that communication error give rise to substantial clinical morbidity and mortality. In a retrospective study of 16,000 in-hospital deaths, the leading cause was communication failure, and surprisingly it was twice as frequent as errors due to lack of clinical skill.³⁻⁴ The paucity of available literature about the impact of effective communication behaviours on overall organizational efficiency and effectiveness from hospitals

of resource limited settings mandates the documentation of such cases.

The current study brings forth the perspective of effective communication through the timely usage of key mobile number which actually saved the life of a critical patient in trauma centre of our setting.

CASE REPORT

A patient 'X', 07 years old female child, case of severe Grade IV dog bite with complete avulsion of scalp and in an unconscious state was brought to the Advance Trauma Centre. She was referred from a village of Punjab to a secondary care hospital in Chandigarh and from there to Advance Trauma Centre of our setting. The patient was examined by a team of senior residents from Departments of General surgery and Plastic surgery. The surgical team required approximately 40,000IU of anti-rabies immunoglobulin for local infiltration to the patient as life saving measure on an urgent basis as there was a very strong possibility of infection permeating to brain. The immunoglobulin as per hospital policy are usually stored in pharmacy of the main hospital due to its high cost and strict cold chain maintenance. The surgical team from Advance Trauma Centre contacted the senior resident on duty from Department of Hospital Administration who was performing his on call duty in administrative control

room which works round the clock on the behalf of Medical Superintendent office. As per the information retrieved by the usual long communication pathway (from emergency> oncall doctors> finding numbers of pharmacy from telephone directory by nurse > sending hospital attendant to the pharmacy> filtering of information> communication gap> non availability of IgG) of senior resident General Surgery the immunoglobulin was not available in the hospital and the senior resident hospital administration was requested to arrange for the same on an urgent basis. The request involved multitude of challenges: The urgency of the life saving serum at night time, the poor patient's unaffordability to procure the serum from outside which was amounting to approximately INR 20000 and above all the limited administrative financial power to senior resident hospital administration for INR 2000. In such a situation of crisis, the use of magic mobile numbers to contact the officials manning the various supportive services round the clock actually proved to be miraculous. The senior resident hospital administration on duty called up the pharmacist on call duty on the magic mobile number and cross checked the status of immunoglobulin, and it so happened that the immunoglobulin was available in the requisite dose. The request was processed by the pharmacist and the immunoglobulin were made available to the surgical team within no time. The immunoglobulin was given to the critically ill patient and which actually saved her life.

Figure 1: Usual communication pathway.

Figure 2: Innovative communication circle with using the same system.

Figure 3: Improved and cost effective communication system by magic mobile numbers.

DISCUSSION

The case report establishes the importance of cross-checking, an important aspect of communication in healthcare management and the prompt use of a contact number from list of 10 contact numbers (instead of not searching the whole telephone directory, involving multiple stakeholders)) of the key officials who are manning the various hospital services available in the administrative control room. Though this is an era of telemedicine and *pima facie* it was a form of communication gap and a simple step involving prompt thinking in the right direction, going back and completing the loop of communication actually proved out to be life saving. In the context of resource limited settings, if we can improve and innovate in our communication network within the existing hospital framework, it can radically improve the outcomes without increasing any burden to the system.^{3,4}

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