



IHC Patient-Centered Communication Series:

Strangers in Crisis: Communication for Emergency Department and Hospital-Based Clinicians Faculty Course (Train-the-Trainer)

Overview

Healthcare team members in emergency departments (ED), urgent care centers and hospital inpatient units face special challenges to help patients and patients' family members. Frequently staff members do not know the patient, and must quickly establish a relationship to effectively address the trauma, serious illness, injury or complex or ambiguous health concerns that brought the patient to the provider. Emergency department and inpatient hospital encounters can be fraught with intensity. Also, pressures that are common throughout health services may be magnified in the ED: time and resource constraints, high information processing needs and high patient volume. For patients and their family members, healthcare settings in general and hospital and the ED in particular can be chaotic and frightening places, engendering feelings of helplessness and distress.

Communication with patients and their family members requires the rapid establishment of rapport. Clinicians must sometimes deliver bad news or help families make difficult decisions, typically without the benefit of an ongoing relationship. As patients are transferred from one clinician to the next and from service to service, effective communication among health care workers is vitally important to ensure quality care.

Healthcare organizations recognize the value of helping clinicians and other team members communicate more effectively with patients and family members. In these times of vulnerability and stress, patients and family members are exceptionally sensitive to the nuances of communication that might convey meaning or hope. Effective and empathic communication promotes excellent clinical care, enhances patient and family satisfaction and reduces the risk of complaints.

The ***Strangers in Crisis: Communication for Emergency Department and Hospital-Based Clinicians*** workshop (available as either a half-day or full-day program) is designed to help clinicians manage communication challenges in emergency department, urgent care and hospital inpatient settings. The 3-day ***Strangers in Crisis: Communication for Emergency Department and Hospital-Based Clinicians*** faculty course (train-the-trainer) prepares individuals to teach the ***Strangers in Crisis*** workshop.

A wide range of provider organizations has trained clinicians and other healthcare team members to teach the ***Strangers in Crisis*** curriculum in their organizations, ensuring broad dissemination. In recognition of the curriculum's efficacy, strong evidence base and enthusiastic embrace by healthcare team members, three health authorities in British Columbia (Vancouver Island Health Authority, Fraser Health Authority and Vancouver Coastal Health) have disseminated ***Strangers in Crisis*** training throughout provider organizations. The training is part of a broader effort to improve patient satisfaction and decrease complaints.

Audience

The ***Strangers in Crisis*** workshop is targeted toward emergency department, urgent care and hospital inpatient team members. The content is particularly useful for clinicians including emergency physicians, residents, nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, pharmacists, social workers, clinical educators and EMS practitioners; clinical specialists including hospitalists, intensivists, procedurists, radiologists and anesthesiologists; and other members of the health care team including lab technicians, unit clerks and porters.

Learners in the ***Strangers in Crisis*** faculty course (train-the-trainer) are typically experienced clinicians, clinician educators or managers with supervisory, training and/or professional development responsibilities who will lead ***Strangers in Crisis*** workshops.

This train-the-trainer course can accommodate 6 to 24 participants to ensure optimal experiential learning in small and large group exercises.

Content

The ***Strangers in Crisis*** train-the-trainer course is based on theories and models of communication between clinicians and patients, between clinicians and families of patients and among healthcare team members. It encompasses structured skill development and opportunities to practice delivering portions of the ***Strangers in Crisis*** workshop. The four course components include:

- 1. Participation in the *Strangers in Crisis* workshop.** As described in the workshop course description, the workshop acknowledges the unique experiences and challenges of clinicians, patients and families in ED, urgent care and hospital settings. It presents an adapted version of the Institute's 4E Model of communication (Engage, Empathize, Educate and Enlist). It specifically addresses clinician-patient communication challenges related to the intense information processing needs and high communication loads in the hospital, urgent care and ED. A key feature of this workshop is to facilitate participants' identification of frustrations and skill gaps they have encountered in ED, urgent care and hospital communications. The program provides a toolkit of techniques to close those gaps and a structured and safe environment for practicing the techniques. Participants learn specific skills for communicating with families and evidence-based strategies and tools for team communication. Situations unique to emergency care are addressed, such as families' preferences for viewing resuscitation attempts.
- 2. Practicing skills taught in the *Strangers in Crisis* workshop with simulated patients and healthcare team members.** Many learners find this the most rewarding aspect of the course. Trained actors portray patients and healthcare team members, and simulated patient interviews and team member encounters provide opportunities for feedback from expert facilitators and peers.
- 3. Delivering and facilitating components of the *Strangers in Crisis* workshop.** Learners prepare segments of the workshop for presentation and receive feedback from expert facilitators and peers.
- 4. Back-home planning** to help integrate and align workshop components with other organizational needs and priorities.

As with all IHC communications curricula, *Strangers in Crisis* draws on the published research evidence on the importance of communication in healthcare generally, with specific emphasis on the ED and inpatient hospital units. The *Strangers in Crisis* train-the-trainer course is based on theories and practice of adult learning.

Expectations

The *Strangers in Crisis* train-the-trainer course is a 3-day intensive and primarily experiential learning opportunity. Learners are expected to participate in all large and small group activities.

The process for becoming an IHC faculty member and conducting IHC workshops requires completion of an IHC faculty development course with practice assessment by an IHC Senior Trainer. Throughout each faculty development course, IHC Senior Trainers and small group facilitators provide feedback to learners and assess their readiness to conduct IHC workshops.

In the event that additional support and coaching is needed prior to teaching an IHC workshop, IHC Senior Trainers are available to provide such personalized support and guidance. Individualized support is scheduled separately and subject to additional fees.

All IHC faculty must use the most up-to-date version of IHC's copyrighted curricular materials for the course(s) they are trained to lead.

To minimize distraction, IHC recommends that learners be freed from additional work-related tasks for the duration of the training.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the train-the-trainer course, learners will:

1. Gain background knowledge and facilitation skills required to conduct IHC's *Strangers in Crisis* workshop at their institution;
2. Develop improved clinical communication skills and the ability to role model those skills through simulated patient sessions;
3. Identify and practice a coaching and feedback model for use with learners and colleagues; and
4. Develop a plan for integrating IHC workshop materials and training to meet the professional development and CE needs at their institution.

Methodology

The *Strangers in Crisis* train-the-trainer course is an intensive and highly interactive program conducted over three consecutive days at a host organization.

Strangers in Crisis consists of brief presentations, interactive exercises, videotaped case studies and skill practice sessions with peers to build participant awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence regarding communication in these settings. Case examples frame realistic issues involving patients, families and teams. The workshop workbook includes an extensive annotated bibliography (also available [online](#)). At the end of the workshop, participants are asked to commit to trying out one or two new communication strategies and then to evaluate the outcomes associated with these approaches.

Experiential learning exercises are an essential element of this curriculum. They are designed to meet diverse learning styles, in accordance with evidence-based theory on adult learning. Exercises are graduated to promote participation in a supportive and safe environment.

An alternative, abbreviated 2.5-day *Strangers in Crisis* train-the-trainer course is available to individuals previously trained to lead IHC's *Clinician-Patient Communication to Enhance Health Outcomes* workshop and with successful workshop leadership experience.

Faculty

Faculty for the *Strangers in Crisis* train-the-trainer course are experienced educators designated as IHC Senior Trainers. Senior Trainers have extensive clinical and clinical teaching experience.

CME

The Institute for Healthcare Communication takes responsibility for the content, quality and scientific integrity of this CME/CE activity.

The Institute for Healthcare Communication is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

The Institute for Healthcare Communication designates the 3-day train-the-trainer course for a maximum of 23.75 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ and the 2.5-day train-the-trainer course for a maximum of 19.25 AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

Continuing education (CE) credit may be available to non-physician participants. IHC will provide a certificate of completion, which can be submitted to learners' respective accrediting organizations. IHC is pleased to provide any necessary documentation to help learners gain CE credits for completion of this activity.

For further information, please contact:

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