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## Factors Affecting Communication between Emergency Department Nurses

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## FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION BETWEEN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT NURSES

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Although much nursing research has focused on communication between nurses and patients, few studies have investigated the factors which affect communication of essential patient information between nurses. In an emergency department or trauma center, communication of essential patient information is vital to effective, immediate intervention. Preliminary observations in an emergency department and review of literature suggested that factors related to the individual nurse and organization may affect the communication of essential information concerning patients.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to describe the nature of communication and identify the personal and organizational emergency departmental factors affecting communication of fundamental patient assessment data between a triage nurse and a primary nurse. One Central Illinois hospital was selected as the site for the investigation because of its classification as a Level I Trauma Center and its dedication to research. Staff members who were registered nurses and employed in the emergency department were invited to participate in the study.

Participant observation was utilized as the method of data collection. Observation periods included both weekdays and weekends of all shifts to obtain a mixture of trauma levels and staff. Theoretical sampling was used to select 32 interactions between nurses. The investigator first observed the exchange of information between the triage nurse and the primary nurse then recorded the observations. Cases observed included five emergent (level one), 13 urgent (level two), and 14 nonurgent (level three). Each dyad was correlated in relation to Benner's scale of nursing expertise to identify potential individual factors affecting communication abilities. Data was collected on organizational factors: staffing adequacy, shift, and presence of other medical personnel. When time and situation permitted, nurses were asked to rate the effectiveness of the communication on a Likert-type scale developed for the study.

Through content analysis of questionnaires, observational data, and field notations, the investigator will identify those variables which affect the communication within the emergency department. From such analysis, questions will be raised for further research.