

On Scene Communication challenges

Thomas Hornsby
Hennepin Emergency Medical Services
Minneapolis, MN

Toward Zero Deaths Conference
Mankato, MN
10/23/2018

A little bit about me...

- Paramedic with Hennepin EMS since 2012
- Community Service Officer Paramedic with the Meeker County Sherriff Dept.
 - Approx. 25,000 people over 600 sq. miles
- Hennepin EMS is an urban/suburban service
 - Averages 85,000 +/- calls for service a year
 - Peak staffing is 25 dual paramedic ambulances

What I aim to cover

- Overview of communication challenges faced
 - By providers
- What some of the responses to these challenges may look like in practice
- Future directions

Challenges with communication



What does this mean?

Other potential challenges with communication

Persons with sensory or intellectual disability

Persons under the influence of altering chemicals (e.g. alcohol, prescription medications, illegal drugs)

What can poor communication lead to?

Frustration?

Anger?

Misunderstanding?

So what can we do to help?

Know your audience!



Vs.



Language barriers and disabilities that affect communication have been shown to decrease quality of care [during a hospital stay]

Impact of patient communication problems on the risk of preventable adverse events in acute care settings.
Bartlett G, Blais R, Tamblyn R, Clermont RJ, MacGibbon B
CMAJ. 2008 Jun 3; 178(12):1555-62.

Understand, listen, and adapt

Remember there are always two sides to a conversation

Just because I understand what I am explaining doesn't mean you do as well

Two sides continued...

Provider	Patient
Personal factors such as, gender of the provider, culture, language, and age	Personal factors such as, gender of the provider, culture, language, and age
Being overworked	Feeling like there is a lack of communication
Interference from family	Anxiety or pain distracting
Environmental factors causing distraction	Environmental factors causing distraction

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4954910/>

How does communication
impact my work as an EMS
provider?

The Twin Cities is home to
many different cultural groups
and languages

How can we bridge
communication gaps where
both parties don't understand
each other?

Somali translation guide

Compiling some of the most frequently asked questions by paramedics, I worked with my department to create a guide with the focus of identifying life threatening emergencies when there is no translator available. Also, incorporated are broader questions to help with answering demographic type questions.

Somali translation guide

Breathing

Buttons at the bottom are hyperlinked to their respective question categories.

Clicking on "Breathing" will bring you to a question list specific for breathing.

Question List: Breathing

Are you having problems breathing?
 Are you short of breath, or feel short of breath?
 Has it ever been worse than this?
 Have you been coughing?
 Did your breathing suddenly or slowly get worse?
 Do you have chronic breathing problems or chronic heart problems?

The questions are each hyperlinked to a specific page.

Clicking on a question will bring you to the translation page.

Neeftu ma kugu dhagaysaa?

HAA **MAYA**

yes no

Are you having problems breathing?

The Somali translation appears first. The patient can point to yes or no to indicate response. The color of the bar on top indicates question category.

To return to the question list, hit the category you want to go to.

Demographics Breathing Cardiac Neurologic General

Sample demographic question

Demographics: ID & Insurance Card

Fadlan ma soo saari kartaa kaarka sharcigaaga iyo kaarakaaga caafimaadka?

Can you please get your personal identification card and your insurance card?

Demographics Breathing Cardiac Neurologic General

Sample question

Demographics: Allergies

Wax dawo ah oo ku xajimooto ama aad xasaasiyad ka qaaddo ma jiraan?

HAA

yes

MAYA

no

Are you allergic to any medications?

Demographics

Breathing

Cardiac

Neurologic

General

Sample statement

General

Waxaan rabnaa in aad faleebo gacantaada ku rakibno. Faleebahaas waxaa loo adeegsan in lagugu ku siiyo wixii daawo ah ee laga yaabo inaad u baahato.

We are going to start an IV in your arm. It will be used to give you medications you may need.

Demographics

Breathing

Cardiac

Neurologic

General

Limitations

- Unable to see or read the text
- Limited scope of questions available
- Unable to understand the specific dialect

How Hennepin EMS uses this guide

- Every ambulance has a tablet used for electronic charting. The translation guide is available as an interactive PDF document on the tablet.
- Used in the current format for approximately 8 months.
- Is easily adaptable and editable so changes or updates occur as needed.

Future directions

- More languages
- Include picture diagrams
- Incorporate audio for each question so a patient may listen and then select an answer
- This concept can be expanded into areas where language or other types of communication barriers are frequently encountered.