

Barriers To Successful Collaboration

Rebecca Douglass

Collaboration in Healthcare

Good inter-disciplinary relationships positively influence healthcare professionals' performance and satisfaction, but also positively affect patient experience and outcomes, improving access and quality of care (Apers & Masquillier, 2024). In fact, according to Homa (2021), seventy percent of all errors in healthcare are from a breakdown in communication amongst teams. A patient may interact with fifty different employees during their hospital stay, and their critical information must be accurately communicated to each person on their team to ensure patient safety (Teamwork, Collaboration, and Delegating. (n.d.). In addition, good collaboration has been shown to decrease patient costs and decrease the length of hospital stays (Teamwork, Collaboration, and Delegating. (n.d.).

Successful collaboration can run like a well-oiled machine but requires careful planning and coordination with shared purpose and goals, excellent communication skills with mutual trust and respect, supportive leadership with discipline and accountability (Freshman et al., 2010), and a "collective motivation for change" (Grady et al., 2023, p. 71). In reality, barriers keep team collaboration from running as smoothly as possible. These barriers can manifest from the top at the organizational level to the individual participants. Understanding these barriers is paramount to developing an integrative, collaborative approach to healthcare.

Barriers to Collaboration

ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS

Organizations, administrators, and senior managers play a significant role in setting a unified vision to foster collaboration. Problems that can arise include inadequate accountability of leadership, lack of open channels for feedback and evaluation of performance amongst the team members, inconsistent or insufficient rules and policies, unknown standards, and insufficient education and training on collaboration (Homa, 2021). One way to approach and rectify these barriers is through system-wide education that prepares healthcare professionals

BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

for integrated approaches and strong leadership to develop policies with standardized communication that supports collaboration (Martin-Misener et al., 2012).

TEAM BARRIERS

Team-level barriers include poor communication systems, lack of patient advocacy, insufficient conflict management, disruptive team dynamics, lack of understanding of a team's strengths, and poor responsibility-sharing (Homa, 2021). A successful team requires complementary strengths among its members (Apers & Masquillier, 2024), with a communication management system that ensures the patient's safety and care are the priority. Team leaders must be well-versed in conflict management, opening communication channels, sharing and enforcing organizational standards, and proliferating the unified vision (Homa, 2021).

INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS

Each individual plays an essential part in the team's collaboration. Individual barriers include fear of conflict, inadequate communication skills (active listening, mutual respect, open-mindedness), lack of trust in other team members, negative attitudes, devaluing other team members, lack of confidence, and competitiveness (Freeman et al., 2010). Since ninety-three percent of communication is body language, tone of voice, and attitude (Teamwork, Collaboration, and Delegating). (n.d), Individuals also need self-awareness and willingness to change (Freeman et al., 2010).

Overcoming and Preventing Barriers

One of the most critical aspects of building a successful collaboration is ensuring that individuals feel "part of the team" (Martin-Misener et al., 2012, p. 338). How can organizations and teams foster this sense of belonging? They can achieve this through training and leadership that embody the following characteristics: sharing knowledge, empowering others, being honest and accurate, respecting others, negotiating differences, assuming good intent, fostering safe spaces, valuing everyone's contributions, and recognizing boundaries (Homa, 2021).

BARRIERS TO SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

To enhance collaboration, it's essential to establish the correct organizational setup to prevent common barriers. The first step involves creating clear policies and procedures that define the culture of the collaborative process. The second step is to provide training on collaboration principles, using real-life scenarios directly relevant to healthcare teams. The third step focuses on fostering a culture that encourages the sharing of accurate information and empowers each team member by recognizing their strengths. Finally, and most importantly, there should be a concentration on patient safety, satisfaction, and performance.

References

- Apers, H., & Masquillier, C. (2024). Facilitators and Barriers in Collaborations Between Community Health Workers with Primary and Well-Being Providers in Primary Healthcare in Belgium. *Healthcare*, 12(23), 2348.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare12232348>
- Freshman, B., Rubino, L., & Yolanda Reid Chassiakos. (2010). *Collaboration across the disciplines in health care*. Jones And Bartlett Publishers.
- Grady, C., Han, H., Kim, D. H., Coderre-Ball, A., & Alam, N. (2023). Family physicians collaborating for health system integration: A scoping review. *BMC Health Services Research*, 23, 1-12. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-023-09063-w>
- Homa, L. (2021). Lesson #3 Interprofessional Collaboration & Teamwork. In YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vcKLuIS-eQ>
- Martin-Misener, R., Valaitis, R., Wong, S. T., MacDonald, M., Meagher-Stewart, D., Kaczorowski, J., O-Mara, L., Savage, R., & Austin, P. (2012). A scoping literature review of collaboration between primary care and public health. *Primary Health Care Research & Development*, 13(4), 327-346. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1463423611000491>
- Teamwork, Collaboration, and Delegating. (n.d.). [Www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llgZ6t1yIJg).
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llgZ6t1yIJg>