Medical Improvisational Skills for Harried Healthcare Professionals

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Overview

• Definition
• Rationale
• Medical Improvisation Examples
• Questions and Discussion
Definition

Medical Improvisation is the study and practice of in-the-moment theater philosophy and techniques applied to healthcare, to improve the health and well-being of providers and patients.

Rationale

• We live in a time of disruptive innovation, in which conflict is inevitable

• Learning and practicing Medical Improvisational skills can help healthcare professionals deal with unexpected developments and feel more engaged in the present

• These feelings of learning and mastery can improve patient outcomes, staff morale, and workplace retention
Rationale, II

• We learn more in our training about technical skills than relationship skills, self-awareness, self-management, and social awareness (emotional intelligence)

• Every healthcare interaction is to some degree improvisational

• The practice of Medical Improvisation can help us become more aware of the leadership styles that build cohesion, such as coaching, visionary, affiliative, and democratic rather than relying on command-and-control and pacesetting leadership styles
Rationale III

• We need emotional intelligence in order to communicate and collaborate respectfully.
• Healthcare is a Complex Adaptive System and Medical Improv builds the skill set necessary for the best human dynamics
• People can learn different skills in the same activity, such as to be more assertive or listen better.
• Opportunity to develop relationships when the stakes aren’t so high
• Stress relief
• Less intellectual learning and more behavioral, like practicing life
Dr. Cohn’s Brief Bio

• To the best of his knowledge, Dr. Cohn is the only practicing general surgeon/MBA in the US who speaks, consults, writes, and teaches about physician-hospital relations.

• Using real-life stories from his work in 43 states, he demonstrates ways that collaboration improves retention and clinical and financial outcomes.

• His four books, Better Communication for Better Care, Collaborate for Success, The Business of Healthcare, and Getting It Done, have sold over 5,000 copies.

• Dr. Cohn has been mentoring physicians in leadership development over a decade, finding that they enjoy learning from a fellow practicing physician.
Ms. Boynton’s Brief Bio

- She is a national speaker and organizational development consultant specializing in communication, collaboration, & emotional intelligence.
- She is a Per Diem RN in a LTCF caring for folks with dementia.
- She is trained in the Professor Watson Curriculum for Medical Improv through Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and a student of improv.
- Her videos, “ Interruption Awareness: A Nursing Minute for Patient Safety” and Blog, “Confident Voices in Healthcare” have drawn audiences from all over the world.
Some Examples of Medical Improvisation

- 20 year-old man with abdominal pain
- KC family example
- Beth’s examples with exit-seeking resident
An Example of Med Improv in Dealing with A Troubling Healthcare Dilemma

• “Doctor, this patient doesn’t look right, even though his vital signs are normal right now.”
• “Yes, but I am in my office now and can’t see him”
• “I am concerned and wanted to make you aware”

• Cardiac arrest several hours later
A Healthier Alternative

• “Doctor, this patient doesn’t look right even though his vital signs are ok”

• *Yes, and* because I am in my office right now, please ask the Rapid Response Team to evaluate him for possible ICU transfer for continuous vital sign monitoring and for a chest X-ray, EKG, and arterial blood gas.”

• “Thank you, Doctor. I appreciate your taking my concerns seriously.”

• “Thank you for calling me.”
Pitfalls to Avoid

• Angry Bird(s)
• Systemic Avoidance
• Event thinking
• Sophisticated resignation
• Current Mastery
Avoiding Amygdala Hijack

- Breathe
- Drink
- Clarification?
- Timing?
- Visualize a balcony
- " your happy place
- Excuse yourself to BR
- Call an AM buddy


Medical Improvisation

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Becoming a Trusted Leader

• Team player
• Responsive and respectful
• Understanding, listening, and learning without judgment
• Safe, approachable, someone who protects confidentiality

• Talented, knowledgeable, competent
• Executes: someone who gets results and honors commitments
• Dedicated: someone who models the work ethic and timeliness

Conflict Resolution Framework

• Set mutually agreeable time to discuss issues
• Prepare by writing behavior, feelings, consequences, and proposed solution:
  - When ... happened
  - I felt ...
  - Because ...
  - In the future, I would appreciate ....
  - What are your thoughts?

Moral: Strive to maintain data-driven, objective, I-messaging format for optimal resolution


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General Guidelines for Giving Feedback

• Kind and helpful.

• Check to see if feedback is wanted. (Unless in leadership role).

• Look for opportunities to include ownership.

• Be specific & don't judge or exaggerate.

• Focus on your concern for the person and behaviors that can be changed.

• Perception check.

• Ask questions.
General Guidelines for Receiving Feedback

- Breathe
- Consider your choices
- Listen carefully and try to drop defensiveness
- Acknowledge the feedback
- Take time to sort out what you have heard
- Be honest with yourself
- Give yourself credit
Lessons Learned

- Medical Improvisation represents a life-long learning journey
- It brings out the best in people and has a positive impact on every problem we have
- Given that most healthcare interactions are unscripted and therefore improvisational, additional training in Medical Improvisation can give us a sense of growth and mastery
Conclusion

• Participants must listen and speak up in order to practice activities
• Medical Improvisation optimizes in-the-moment behaviors
• Authentic engagement is a prerequisite for progress
• Facilitation, coaching, & reflection support organizational needs, such as professionalism and improving the patient experience

• Medical Improvisation represents a way to be fully engaged in the present
• It does not matter so much where we begin, provided that we:
  – start now
  – build a culture that supports reflection, inquiry, and dialogue
  – act, learn, and adapt
To Learn More

• Please contact us with your specific needs
• Stage an event to give group members a taste of the experience and the benefits that they can derive
• Provide ongoing guidance
• Train-the-trainer opportunities
• For further information, please contact:
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