

# Challenges of endocommunication in the work process of health professionals and their impact on patient care

## Desafios da endocomunicação no processo de trabalho de profissionais da saúde e seus reflexos na assistência ao paciente

## Desafíos de la endocomunicación en el proceso de trabajo de los profesionales de la salud

Aline Rocha Santos<sup>1</sup>, Carolina Zimmer Fruett<sup>2</sup>, Kelen Lira Fortunatti<sup>3</sup>, Liliana Antonioli<sup>4</sup>, Joel Boaretto<sup>5</sup>

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# REVISIA

1. Fatima College. Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-1621-1093>

2. Fatima College. Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1222-8843>

3. Fatima College. Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9164-1701>

4. Fatima College. Caxias do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0806-9910>

5. Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9810-5043>

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### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Avaliar o processo de endocomunicação na área da saúde e seus reflexos no processo de trabalho das equipes técnicas, bem como os impactos destas na percepção e atendimento do paciente, como tomador de serviço. Trata-se de um estudo híbrido que abrange uma revisão bibliográfica estruturada em subníveis de ações e impactos, seguida de um processo de user experience (UX), onde se buscou validar as hipóteses oriundas da literatura através de uma experimentação vivencial. **Métodos:** Modelo híbrido de pesquisa exploratória e qualitativa, apoiada em fundamentação teórica e experimentação prática, como meio de verificação e validação de hipóteses, levantadas durante o processo de pesquisa. Resultados: Percebeu-se que, embora a busca por um atendimento profissional na área da saúde esteja, geralmente, atrelada a um momento difícil, os processos de trabalho exercem um papel fundamental para eficiência organizacional e assistencial no cuidado ao paciente. **Considerações Finais:** Determinar rotinas e definir processos de trabalho vocacionados à vivência do usuário e o contexto que envolve o processo de tomada deste tipo de serviço é condição fundamental para o estabelecimento da credibilidade técnica e segurança do paciente frente à instituição que o recebe.

Descritores: Gestão em Saúde. Comunicação Interdisciplinar. Eficiência Organizacional. Endocomunicação.

### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To evaluate the endocommunication process in the health sector and its effects on the work process of technical teams, as well as their impacts on the patient's perception and care, as service recipients. This is a hybrid study that encompasses a bibliographical review structured into sub-levels of actions and impacts, followed by a user experience (UX) process, where we sought to validate hypotheses arising from the literature through experiential experimentation. **Methods:** Hybrid model of exploratory and qualitative research, supported by theoretical foundations and practical experimentation, as a means of verifying and validating hypotheses raised during the research process. Results: It was noticed that, although the search for professional care in the health sector is generally linked to a difficult moment, work processes play a fundamental role in organizational and care efficiency in patient care. Final Considerations: Determining routines and defining work processes aimed at the user's experience and the context that involves the process of receiving this type of service is a fundamental condition for establishing technical credibility and patient safety in relation to the institution that receives the patient.

Descriptors: Health Management. Interdisciplinary Communication. Efficiency, Organizational. Internal Communication..

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Evaluar el proceso de endocomunicación en el área de la salud y sus impactos en el proceso de trabajo de los equipos técnicos, así como sus impactos en la percepción y atención al paciente, como receptor de servicios. Se trata de un estudio híbrido que comprende una revisión bibliográfica estructurada en subniveles de acciones e impactos, seguido de un proceso de experiencia de usuario (UX), donde se buscó validar las hipótesis surgidas de la literatura a través de la experimentación experiencial. **Métodos:** Modelo híbrido de investigación exploratoria y cualitativa, sustentado en fundamentos teóricos y experimentación práctica, como medio de verificación y validación de hipótesis planteadas durante el proceso de investigación. Resultados: Se observó que, aunque la búsqueda por atención profesional en el área de la salud esté generalmente ligada a un momento difícil, los procesos de trabajo desempeñan un papel fundamental en la eficiencia organizativa y asistencial en la atención al paciente. Consideraciones finales: Determinar rutinas y definir procesos de trabajo orientados a la experiencia del usuario y al contexto que rodea el proceso de recepción de este tipo de servicios es condición fundamental para establecer la credibilidad técnica y la seguridad del paciente en la institución que los recibe.

ORIGINAL

## Introduction

Globally, we are facing a large-scale pandemic, marked by a distinctive element compared to previous ones: the globalization of information. Online communication has provided important preventive advantages in extreme scenarios. However, misinterpretations, analytical limitations, and insufficient contextualization of facts have led to adverse consequences. One example was the implementation of uniform measures to combat the virus by countries with widely different contexts in terms of climate, culture, socioeconomic development, and access to healthcare services during the COVID-19 pandemic. This homogeneous approach resulted in severe economic impacts and the collapse of various health systems around the world (Seixas, Merhy, Feuerwerker et al., 2021).

In general, inadequate communication compromises the maintenance and flow of previously functional routines and work processes. However, it is often not immediately recognized that these communication lapses directly affect the people who depend on the services impacted by poor interaction between stakeholders. This issue becomes even more critical in the healthcare sector, where interactions are directly related to the preservation of life, the exercise of empathy, and the management of pain (Santos, Grilo, Andrade et al., 2010).

The fast-paced routine of healthcare professionals, combined with the complexity and volume of information involved in a single patient encounter, makes internal communication a key factor in ensuring the quality of care provided. Furthermore, effective communication is essential for patients to place the necessary trust in the team responsible for their care.

Internal communication, or endocommunication, refers to the internal exchange of information that takes place within an organization or system, involving interactions between team members or departments. In the healthcare context specifically, the term refers to the set of communicative processes among healthcare professionals working within the same institution or team. Endocommunication is essential for ensuring efficiency, quality, and safety in patient care, as failures in this process can lead to errors, delays, or interruptions in care, compromising clinical outcomes and the patient experience (Fiuza, Martini, Sartori, 2021).

Given this scenario, and based on the proposing researchers' experience in healthcare management and service coordination, critical points were identified that formed the foundation for choosing this topic. Therefore, the present study proposes to evaluate the process of endocommunication in the healthcare field and its effects on the work processes of technical teams, as well as the impact on patient perception and care, as service recipients.

## Method

Experiential UX research was conducted between January and May 2020 in five hospitals located in the Serra Gaúcha region, with the researchers assuming the roles of patients or companions. This approach allowed for the observation of communicative interactions under real-life conditions.

Based on the practical experience of the researchers, who are healthcare professionals, hypotheses were formulated regarding the negative repercussions of communication failures within hospital services—repercussions that were further amplified in the context of the pandemic. To assess these issues, a hybrid methodological model was chosen, combining exploratory and qualitative research, supported by both theoretical foundations and practical experimentation.

The combination of these approaches enabled a closer engagement with the problem being investigated, contributing to a more realistic analysis, despite the qualitative—and therefore subjective—nature of the research. Furthermore, it allowed for the development of proposals to improve endocommunication, with the goal of enhancing work processes in the healthcare sector. These proposals aim to generate positive impacts on organizational efficiency and, above all, on patient safety.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Endocommunication and the Healthcare Work Process**

According to Perles (2007), the communication process is one of the most relevant phenomena for the human species. Understanding this process requires a historical analysis of the origins of speech, the development of languages, and the transformations that have occurred over time. Language, culture, and technology are inseparable elements in the dynamics of communication.

Endocommunication, or internal communication within the workplace, is widely recognized as a factor that directly impacts team performance and, consequently, the quality of service or product delivery. In the healthcare sector, this process plays a crucial role in ensuring humanized care and providing a safe patient experience, as the search for medical attention is generally associated with vulnerability and illness (Fiuza, Martini, Sartori, 2021).

In the field of nursing, Larocca and Mazza (2003) observe that basing healthcare actions solely on strategic behavior focused on quantitative results and pre-established plans often results in misunderstandings. They also emphasize that Habermas' perspective highlights how social relationships—historically dynamic and marked by contradictions between classes, groups, and cultures—directly influence communication. In this context, language can either facilitate or hinder understanding.

Awareness of the importance of communication in care is fundamental for developing more humanized nursing. This approach transforms the relationships between interdisciplinary professionals and between professionals and patients into relationships of care based on effective communication. It also enhances patient safety and the safety of others involved in healthcare delivery (Larocca & Mazza, 2003).

However, inadequate communication is among the main factors associated with medication errors. These errors are defined as any preventable event that may cause or lead to inappropriate medication use or patient harm, while the medication is in the control of a healthcare professional, patient, or consumer (Santos, Souza et al., 2014).

Hemesath (2019) highlights that approximately 65% of adverse events—circumstances that could have or did result in unnecessary harm to the patient—are caused by communication failures among professionals, especially during the transfer of critical information such as allergies or complications. Supporting this, Lemos (2018) reinforces that failures in information transfer during postoperative handovers are critical factors that compromise patient safety.

These findings reinforce the need to improve endocommunication processes as a central strategy for patient safety and for enhancing the quality of care in the health sector. Endocommunication is intrinsic to all healthcare work processes and cuts across all professions.

Bellaguarda (2020) points out that truly effective communication must be objective, clear, precise, and unambiguous, avoiding technical or specific jargon that may hinder understanding. Each professional should identify themselves, stating their name, role, and relevant procedure or information, promoting patient safety and clear, objective, and responsible communication (Fassarella, 2013). This approach reduces risks, promotes safety, and improves intra- and inter-team relationships, as well as communication with patients and families.

However, Costa (2017) highlights that many healthcare professionals still lack empathy and communication skills, often using technical language without verifying the understanding of patients or even interdisciplinary team members such as administrative staff. This can lead to conflicts, care failures, and even anxiety, distress, and pessimism among those involved in the work process.

Santos, Barroso, and Silva (2020) mention that handover—the transfer of data, information, and responsibilities from one professional or team to another—is a priority for the World Health Organization (WHO) in reducing adverse events. It is considered an essential tool for continuity of care, as an efficient handover with complete and accurate information contributes to patient safety, while omissions or incorrect data increase the risk of harm.

These authors also emphasize that clear and precise communication channels are fundamental for decision-making and conflict resolution, promoting quality in healthcare delivery. Therefore, it becomes evident that effective endocommunication is essential for minimizing risks, ensuring continuity of care, providing safer and more humanized service, and fostering a collaborative and healthy work environment for teams.

### **User Experience (UX)**

The term "User Experience (UX)" has been widely used across different fields of knowledge, resulting in varied interpretations, especially due to its multidisciplinary, dynamic, and high-impact nature. These aspects make UX application results particularly significant and unique.

The Brazilian Association of Technical Standards (ABNT, 2011) defines user experience as the "people's perceptions and responses resulting from the use and/or anticipated use of a product, system, or service." This normative definition emphasizes the subjectivity of UX, as each individual interacts based on their own background and history (Naumann et al., 2007). In other words, UX encompasses all aspects of a person's interaction with an artifact, whether before, during, or after use, considering the dynamic relationships between product and/or service, system, and context (Krippendorff, 2006).

The UX framework can be used to understand the factors that influence patients in situations where endocommunication fails. Authors such as Roto et al. (2009) and Vermeeren et al. (2010) suggest methods, techniques, and structures that assist professionals interested in UX to identify paths and tools for studying user experience.

In many cases, UX evaluation presents an intersubjective character (Padovani et al., 2012), involving the user's perception, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the experience, and their desires and needs. Padovani et al. (2012) reinforce this view by stating that UX analysis results from the triangulation of multiple perspectives, including those of professionals, users, and objective data.

Moreover, user experience aligns with the concept of human-centered design, prioritizing human needs over technological directions. This focus can lead to more pleasant experiences, greater acceptance of services, loyalty to the institution, and increased user motivation and satisfaction (Eijk et al., 2012).

## Results and Discussion

The communication process plays a central role in the professional environment, especially in healthcare, due to the vulnerability of service users, who generally seek care for issues of vulnerability and extreme need, such as pain or illness. During the pandemic, this dynamic became even more evident, exposing possible communication weaknesses within and between sectors and healthcare institutions.

The results obtained from the bibliographic research and practical experience confirmed the hypotheses raised, highlighting the following weaknesses:

I. Inadequate shift handover: Information is passed on in a collective and generic manner, without specific details, which harms continuity of care. II. Non-standardized technical vocabulary: The lack of standardization in technical terms among different professional categories causes misunderstandings and negatively impacts interaction with patients. III. Lack of humanization in care: Disregard for the individuality of the patient results in negative experiences and unsatisfactory outcomes for both parties. IV. Deficiency in the training of technical teams: Failures in technical preparation and communication incompatibilities directly affect the quality of care. V. Lack of clarity in the explanation of procedures and medications: Incomplete or confusing information has immediate impacts on patients and compromises trust in the care provided. VI. Inadequate personal profile for hospital care: Personal characteristics of professionals, such as lack of empathy and communication skills, create barriers from triage to hospital discharge.

Furthermore, during the lived experience, critical aspects were identified that corroborate both the hypotheses raised and the theoretical verifications. Unfortunately, the experience demonstrated that hospital care tends to be conducted in a systemic and automated manner, with few exceptions of more humanized approaches.

Operational procedures in triage, for example, proved to be generic and standardized, without considering the specifics of each case, resulting in disjointed approaches that hinder the harmonious continuation of care. Additionally, the emphasis on routine fulfillment reinforces impersonal care,

making the service mechanical and harming the relationship between patients and healthcare professionals.

Another point observed was the frequent use of technical vocabulary without clear explanations or concern for effective understanding, which creates communication barriers, especially for those who are unfamiliar with medical terminology or who feel inhibited to ask questions.

The limitations of the experience include the lack of exploration of hospitalization cases during the studied period, as this condition did not occur for either the proponents or their families. This factor restricted the analysis to outpatient and triage care.

However, the results obtained reinforce the need for investment in team qualification, prioritizing topics such as endocommunication and effective communication for the humanization of care, and humanization and flexibility in the work process. The adoption of a patient-centered approach that takes into account individualities and values clarity in the transmission of information can generate positive impacts on the user experience, promoting greater trust, safety, and satisfactory outcomes in care.

## **Final Considerations**

The hybrid approach used in this study allowed us to identify that the effectiveness of communication is an aspect that remains underexplored in health sciences, particularly in the development of tools that strengthen the relationships between communication, information, treatment, and dialogue. These interactions are fundamental for improving the quality of care and the work processes of healthcare professionals.

Furthermore, it was found that improving communication within healthcare institutions has the potential to significantly reduce the occurrence of operational errors and contribute to patient safety. According to the literature consulted, the main source of imbalance in care lies in inadequate communication among the technical team and between them and patients, families, and other professionals involved in care.

It is also considered that modernization, technology, and innovation serve as tools to facilitate and streamline repetitive processes. However, the focus of healthcare must remain on its primary client: the human being, who is a unique individual and requires personalized and truly humane treatment. The interaction between healthcare professionals, patients, and their families must be clear, empathetic, welcoming, and continuous, minimizing feelings of distress and uncertainty to the greatest extent possible.

Finally, there is a significant opportunity for improvement in the training and qualification of healthcare professionals, both in terms of technical-operational skills and the development of competencies related to effective communication. Emotional balance and psychological clarity must be incorporated into the

preparation of these professionals. This action requires an organizational restructuring, which should involve both educational institutions and hospitals, thus contributing to a genuinely humanized and efficient professional practice.

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**Autor de correspondência**

Liliana Antonioli

Rua Tobias Barreto, 263. CEP: 89035-070.

Blumenau, Santa Catarina, Brasil.

[lili.antonioli17@gmail.com](mailto:lili.antonioli17@gmail.com)