

## EDUCATIONAL DILEMMA:

## WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF RUDENESS ON OVERALL MEDICAL TEAM PERFORMANCE?

**Reference:**

Riskin A, Erez A, Foulk TA, Kugelman A, Gover A, Shoris I, Riskin KS, Bamberger PA. The Impact of Rudeness on Medical Team Performance: A Randomized Trial. *PEDIATRICS* 2015; 136(3). DOI: 10.1542/peds.2015-1385  
[www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2015-1385](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/doi/10.1542/peds.2015-1385)

**Why is this paper relevant to emergency medicine education?**

Emergency departments (ED) rely strongly on team-based medicine. Such environments are also impacted by stressful situations that can result in less than professional behavior. Mild rudeness/incivility has been found to effect cognitive tasks, decrease creativity and flexibility, and result in less helpful and prosocial behavior<sup>1</sup>. Understanding the impact of negative human behavior on the overall performance of medical teams is important for patient safety and reducing iatrogenic events.

**Level of Evidence:** 1B

**Level of Learning:** Hospital-based medical teams

**Funding Source:** Israel Science Foundation. No potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

**Study Design:** Randomized, double-blinded trial using 72 NICU professionals (physicians and nurses).

**Setting:** Four urban Israeli hospitals.

**Synopsis**

Researchers examined the effect of mildly rude behavior on a medical team's diagnostic and procedural performance. It was hypothesized that mildly rude behavior would negatively impact the overall performance of the team.

The outcome measures of this study included the following:

- Diagnostic performance (i.e. participants identified the cause of the patient's deterioration),
- Procedural performance (i.e. participants provided appropriate resuscitative measures),
- Information-sharing (i.e. participants shared vital information in a timely manner),

- Help-seeking (i.e. participants appeared comfortable seeking help from colleagues).

To study these parameters, 24 NICU teams (1 physician and 2 nurses per team) participated in a pediatric simulation-based resuscitation. These teams were randomly divided into 2 groups:

- Study group: Participants were exposed to standardized, mildly rude feedback (regardless of team performance) from an independent observer before and during the simulation scenario.

- Control group: Participants were exposed to standardized neutral feedback.

Both teams were independently rated by a blinded, 3-person panel of NICU professionals, with respect to their team diagnostic and procedural performance, information-sharing, and help-seeking.

Researchers concluded that mildly rude behavior had a significant adverse effect on procedural ( $P=0.008$ ) and diagnostic ( $P=0.005$ ) performance of a medical team.

Specifically, when teams were exposed to rudeness, tasks that required information-sharing adversely effected diagnostic performance, and tasks requiring help-seeking adversely effected procedural performance.

Of note, research in patient safety and quality improvement has largely focused on improving broad systems and technology<sup>2,3</sup>. This study highlights the potential role of negative human behavior on iatrogenic events.

**References:**

1. Engle RW, Kane MJ. Executive attention, working memory capacity, and a two-factor theory of cognitive control. In: Ross B, ed. *The Psychology of Learning and Motivation*. Vol. 44. New York, NY: Elsevier; 2004:145–199
2. Ligi I, Millet V, Sartor C, et al. Iatrogenic events in neonates: beneficial effects of prevention strategies and continuous monitoring. *Pediatrics*. 2010;126(6). Available at: [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/126/6/e1461](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/126/6/e1461)
3. Starmer AJ, Spector ND, Srivastava R, et al; I-PASS Study Group. Changes in medical errors after implementation of a handoff program. *N Engl J Med*. 2014; 371(19):1803–1812

## BOTTOM LINE:

EVEN MILD RUDENESS AND INCIVILITY CAN HAVE DEVASTATING EFFECTS ON TEAM PERFORMANCE, RESULTING IN HARMFUL PRACTICES THAT POTENTIALLY IMPACT PATIENT SAFETY.