UNIT 1 COMMUNICATION

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

• define communication;
• explain the need of communication in relation to nursing service;
• enumerate the characteristics of communication and its process;
• describe the barriers of communication;
• list the types and methods of communication; and
• state the communication media.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is the basis for all human interactions. It is through communication that members of any group reach to some understanding with each other, build trust, co-ordinate their relations, plan strategies for goal accomplishment, agree upon to reach a common goal.

We understand that we use language in thinking, but of course we also use it to communicate with others. One can also use signals to communicate one's ideas to others.

Communication theory provides a framework for considering the inter relationship between the structural organization of man (here we talk of Nursing Service Organization) and his/her environment.

The communication, in whatever form it may be is meaningful if only it is effective. Therefore, let us learn from this unit the definition, need for
communication, types and its characteristics, the barriers in communication and the media used in communication, followed by the usual summing up and check your progress features.

1.2 DEFINITION

In this sub-section you will learn about definition of communication.

Communication consists of signals made by one person that have meaning for another person which affect their behaviour and action, leading to interaction.

In simple terms communication can be defined as "a process of passing messages, ideas, facts, opinions, attitudes, information and understanding, from one person to another". For the purpose of communication, there has to be a source who is considered as the sender, a receiver who will receive the message or for whom the message is meant for and the message itself which the sender wishes to communicate.

Therefore, now let us consider how John M. Brion defines communication as, which is simple and comprehensive. He says "Communication is the transmission and receiving of information, feelings, and/or attitudes with the overall purpose of having understood, producing a response".

Now that we have gone through the above we are clear that:

i) Communication is a two way process

ii) Communication is a continuous process involving interaction between two or more people.

iii) Communication takes place between human beings, because man is a social animal and the only creature who can speak. Language is used for communication.

1.3 NEED FOR COMMUNICATION

Why do we need to communicate? We had learnt earlier that man is a social animal, and therefore need to exchange thoughts, ideas, emotions, etc. In the health care system, the nurses deal with human beings. They have to deal with the patients, patient’s relatives, colleagues, seniors, subordinates or any one visiting the organization (hospital or community centre). It is a necessity to be able to communicate with each one of them, so that the goals of nursing services are achieved.

The nurse has to communicate with the patient for developing an interpersonal relationship. Thereafter, she needs to communicate the hospital policy to him/her, instructions for medications, health teaching to the patient and attendants/relatives. This will ask for clear and effective communication, for efficient patient care.

The nurse also needs to communicate with her seniors or subordinates. A charge nurse needs to disseminate a good amount of routine information to all who are concerned. This may include patient’s condition, treatment needed to be carried out, investigations to be performed etc., either to her seniors or doctors who may seek information. This will call for good skill to communicate either in the form of writing or verbal report.

The nurse administrator’s message to the subordinate, which is a routine, need to be disseminated clearly, so that no misinterpretation of the message takes place which will obviously lead to confusion and chaos.
1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION

We shall consider the following characteristics of communication for our purpose to be used in the nursing service:

1. It is a co-operative process involving two parties — the one who sends and the one who receives the message.

2. The respective parties (the sender and the receiver) of the communication must have the ability to convey and listen to what his counterpart is communicating.

3. Communication includes, sending the message as well as receiving a response or interaction to the message that was sent. Therefore, it is a two way traffic.

4. The response to the communication is essential, because it reflects the impact of the communication and states that the communication is effective.

5. The message to be communicated could be verbal, written, in signs and symbols or through gestures. More than one means could be adopted for the communication to be effective.

6. The purpose of communication is that of passing information and coming to an understanding between two or more people to bring about a commonness of purpose, to achieve a goal.

7. Communication is essentially a continuous process to bring about effectiveness and efficiency of ongoing operation, planning and policy making.

8. Communication can flow vertically (upward or downward) between superiors and subordinates, horizontally among people occupying similar positions and ranks, as well as diagonally between persons working at different levels at different departments within an organization.

1.5 PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication between two or more persons involves a series of elements. This is called communication process. Also, communication is not only a two way process but a multi-dimensional and multi-stage process. We shall now see the elements of communication, steps in the process of communication and the process of communication itself.

1.5.1 Elements of Communication

In order to communicate, we shall have to have the following basic elements:

i) Communicator(s) or sender(s)

ii) Message(s)

iii) Medium of communication (i.e the media)

iv) Receiver(s)

Further, in relation to the message(s) transmitted by the sender you should be familiar with the term “encoding” which means the message being properly prepared in terms, symbols, language, and precision and ready to be transmitted. “Decoding” on the other hand is the responsibility of the receiver so as to how he deciphers the message and bring out the original meaning as has been sent by the sender.
These elements are diagrammatically represented in Fig. 1.1.

![Diagram of Communication Elements]

**Fig. 1.1: Elements of Communication**

From the figure above, let us learn more about each element.

i) **Sender or the Communicator**

Sender is the person or source where the communication originates. Conception of an idea, thought or information, which the sender wishes to convey ignites or initiates communication.

The intended message of the sender is precised. The greater the precision, higher is the accuracy of the message. Therefore, clarity of thoughts is an essential step in the communication process.

ii) **Encoding**

Encoding is preparing the information in a suitable language that will be understood by the receiver. This may be in signs, symbols or abbreviations (verbal or non-verbal). The process of transformation of the message to codes or symbols is called encoding.

iii) **Message**

The encoded message is required to be transmitted appropriately. The message may be verbal or written.

iv) **Media**

Media is the means through which the message is conveyed. Once the message is encoded and ready to be sent, it requires one or more medium to pass through. This medium could be a letter, telephone, a face to face conversation, video or audio cassette. The choice of media usually depends upon the nature, importance and urgency of the message.

The media could be through broadcasting and telecasting too, if the message is of importance to reach the public at a short time.

v) **Decoding and the Receiver**

At the receipt of the message three processes take place at the receiver's end:

- Recognition of the message
- Perception of the message
- Comprehension of the message

Here, the receiver has to first recognize the message in order to respond to it. The process of recognizing and perceiving the message goes side by side. This is known as decoding. By perception, we mean here that the receiver interprets and translates the message and establishes the original message that was sent by the communicator.

The receiver interprets the information according to his/her intelligence, attitudes, memories, emotional states, values, needs, expectations and desires. This at times pose as a barrier. (We shall discuss it in the next unit.) But finally the receiver comprehends the message which makes the communication complete.

vi) **Feedback**

Feedback is the response from the receiver to the communicator. If the
message is well understood by the receiver he/she normally gives some sort of response. Once this response or feedback reaches the sender, a common-ness is achieved and this confirms the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of the communication. Thereafter, the sender either continue sending the message or repeat the message as the case may be.

Normally, the aim of communication is to elicit the desired response. Communication may produce any of the following three responses:

- A desired response
- No response
- Undesired response

The successful or effective communication is considered when the desired response is produced.

1.5.2 Stages of Communication and the Influencing Factors

Daniel C. Feldman and Huigh J. Arnold stated the stages of communication as:

- Attention
- Comprehension and understanding
- Acceptance of information as true
- Retention and action

i) Attention

Feldman and Arnold further stressed on two main influencing factors:

a) Context of the communication
b) Characteristics of the message

The context of the message call for:

- Amount of communication
- The direction of communication
- Communication network

The characteristics of the message on the other hand will include factors like:

- Novelty of the message
- Personal importance
- Intensity of the message

ii) Comprehension and Understanding

In this stage, the influencing factors are:

- Semantics of the message (words having definite ideas/meanings)
- Perception of the receiver

In the semantics of the message, the influencing factors are use of proper words, abbreviations, symbols, avoidance of jargon, and non-verbal clues, etc. Perception of the receiver will be influenced by his/her pre-conceived ideas, projecting his/her own beliefs, unwanted conclusions, etc.

iii) Acceptance of the Information as True

The factors having direct bearing on the third stage may be influenced by:

a) Credibility of the communicator, i.e., his expertise, past performance and attractiveness.
b) To extent the messages are threatening. Personal threatening messages are dissonant information that does not conform to the receiver’s beliefs.

iv) **Retention and Action**

The influencing factors of this stage may be stated as:

a) The manner in which the messages are presented. That is, are they presented logically? Explicitly? Orally? Written? Are they repeated and concluded?, etc.

b) Types of reward system existing in the organization. This may be intrinsic or extrinsic and being considered or not.

The above discussion has brought you to a stage of understanding the process of communication, along with the stages of communication and their influencing factors.

**Check Your Progress 1**

Fill in the blanks:

1) One cannot help but .................................. as a ......................... being.

2) John M. Brion defines Communication as the transmission and ..................... of ..................... feelings and/or attitudes with the overall purpose of having ..................... producing a .....................

3) Place a tick against the most appropriate answer:

i) Communication:
   a) involves interaction
   b) is a continuous process
   c) is a multi-stage, multi-dimensional process
   d) includes all the above

ii) Encoding is:
   a) a step of the communication process
   b) an element of the communication process
   c) a stage of the communication process
   d) none of the above

1.6 **TYPES OF COMMUNICATION**

There are various types of ‘communication’, depending upon the number of criteria. The following table (Fig. 1.2) will help you understand the types of communication with reference to its primary basis of classification.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Primary Basis of Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal and Nonverbal or Written</td>
<td>Use of language in verbal communication use of symbols, code, gestures in nonverbal use of written words in written communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal and informal</td>
<td>The design or the structure in which the communication is taking place in a formal setting or an informal setup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Group and intergroup, Organisational and Cultural</td>
<td>Number of personnel involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward, Downward and Horizontal</td>
<td>Direction of flow of communication between Superior, Subordinates or among Colleagues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 1.2: Types of Communication
It is seen that non-verbal messages are more truthful than the verbal ones. Duncan Starkey (1989) has expressed non-verbal communication as follows:

a) Body motion or kinetic behaviour: like gestures, facial expressions, movements, posture, etc.

b) Paralanguage like quality of voice, non-fluent speech, laughter, yawning and grunting.

c) Proximics: The nearness and the distance of space maintained by the people during their interaction.

d) Olfaction: The sense of smell.

e) Skin sensitivity: striking, hitting, holdings (embraces and hand shakes, bidding of farewell, etc.)

f) Artifacts like the physic of the person, in terms of height, clothes worn, make up, eyeglasses, use of perfume, etc.

g) Silence, itself is an unspoken language.

It is inevitable that the verbal communication is always accompanied by non-verbal communication. If this is supported by each other in an appropriate way the communication is said to be most effective.

Selection of communication mode vary according to the demand of the situation. Be it written or verbal. Let us examine them along with their merits and demerits.

Written Communication

These are permanent records which are definite and carry a definite meaning. It is a slower method in terms of involvement of manpower and paper work. But it is verifiable and reliable. Unlike verbal communication the original meaning of message is not distorted. Though written communication makes the dealings more formal, but it creates a feeling of being bound to carry on a task.

Oral Communication

These are spoken words and cannot be verified. The message is distorted when spoken or received. Unlike written communication, it carries the advantage of being faster and also better understood because repeating is possible on the spot. Oral communication being faster creates a less formal atmosphere.

Now, let us see how non-verbal communication supports verbal communication. Knapp Mark (1972) said that non-verbal behaviour facilitates communication in the following manner:

1) Re-inforcing: Reinforcement verbal message by repeating, complementing or by accenting.

2) Contradicting: There are occasions when non-verbal behaviour contradicts the verbal message. Here the verbal language does not coincide with the body language and contradicts each other.

3) Substituting: Simple facial expressions sometimes communicate more, without any verbal communication.

4) Relating and Regulating: Albert (1968) said that 80 per cent of the communication takes place through body language for example nodding of the head, eye movement, shift of position, signaling another person to stop or continue speaking.
Therefore, you will understand the importance of both the verbal and non-verbal communication and the use of them during your day to day working life with patients who fail to understand your language, or also the use of non-verbal communication used in the operation theatre.

### Check Your Progress 2

1) Match the types of communication given in column ‘A’ on the basis of their classification given in column ‘B’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i) Verbal and non-verbal</td>
<td>a) Direction of flow of information from superiors, subordinates and colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Formal and informal</td>
<td>b) Use or absence of word code for communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Upward, downward, horizontal</td>
<td>c) Number of persons involved at any time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Interpersonal, group, intergroup, organizational and cultural</td>
<td>d) Design or structure for flow of information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Place a tick against the most appropriate answer:

i) Sending information through a fax is an example of:
   a) Oral communication  
   b) Written communication  
   c) Non-verbal communication  
   d) None of the above

ii) A patient complaining of pain by holding his abdomen is expressing by:
   a) Complimenting  
   b) Repeating  
   c) Relating  
   d) Accenting

### 1.6.1 Methods of Communication

There are two basic methods or channels of communication. They are:

a) Formal  
b) Informal

You may refer to Unit 3 of Block 1 of BNS-110 where you were acquainted with formal and informal organizations. Also refer to the same unit for line and staff organization. Understanding the structure of the organization, now you will understand how information is communicated. These informations need to be communicated may either be sent through formal method of communication, or through informal method.

a) **Formal Communication**

Formal communication is therefore the one which follows line of authority. There is a definite structure for this method of communication, which identifies the source, passage, interfaced receiver (i.e., the persons in the hierarchy) and the final receiver.

This communication may take place between superior and subordinate known as vertical, subordinate and subordinate or department to department known as Horizontal, Wheel type and the Web type. The flow of information in a formal system are shown in Fig. 1.3.
Communication

Superior (Nursing Superintendent)
(Instructions and directions to be issued)

Subordinate 1
(Assistant Nursing Superintendent)

Subordinate 2
(Ward Sister)

Subordinate 3
(Staff Nurse)

Fig. 1.3: Vertical Communication

Example: For transfer of a patient from a surgical ward to a Medical ward

Fig. 1.4: Horizontal Communication

The wheel type of communication system is another formal communication, where the superior or supervisor is at the centre and the information is passed out to and received by the subordinates or employees through the spokes. Employees are not encouraged to exchange ideas between one another and the superior controls the flow of information. This helps to avoid inconsistencies and misunderstandings in interpreting what is being said.

Fig. 1.5: The Wheel Type of Communication

In the web system, communication tends to be more open. The superior still stands at the centre, but the employees (subordinates) are encouraged to
exchange information freely in any channel they can find open. The superior acts more as a facilitator. The system distributes ideas quickly and there is an attitude towards open communication and employee participation, helping to build a strong team spirit.

Fig. 1.6: The Web System of Communication

The demerit of this system is that, rumour may be heard and matters go out of control. Feed back of progress may take a long time to reach the superior.

**Three dimensional communication** is another formal communication. Communication should not be just one way. For a complex organization (like a hospital where various departments exist) to function smoothly, communication must move three ways. Not only must a superior furnish information downward to the employees, but employees must communicate their ideas and feelings upward to him/her. Since co-operation with other line of staff departments are also important, there must also be sideways flow of information. This up, down, and across process is called three dimensional communication.

b) **Informal Communication**

Unlike formal communication, informal communication does not have any structured design. It has no definite channel of communication nor does it follow any line of authority. Information flows socially among the employees which has no official control or sanction. The message or the information spreads in all directions and to all levels.
Rumours or Grapevine is one such type of informal communication which is inevitable in an organization. The superior should listen to it because it is one way of getting an idea of what is going on. But a superior should not depend upon it for receiving accurate information and should never use it to disseminate information.

The grapevine is most active when there is an absence of good communication. If employees are not told about changes that will affect them, they will make their own speculations through the grapevine. As a result, grapevine carries rumours and lies more often than it does the truth.

Check Your Progress 3
Fill in the blanks:

a) The different methods of formal communication are ..........................................

b) The grapevine is most active when .................................................................

c) The three dimensional communication allows communications to flow ..............

1.7 BARRIERS OF COMMUNICATION

Many factors interfere with communication making it ineffective. These act as barriers to effectiveness. We shall discuss them as follows:

1.7.1 Barriers other than those Related to Elements of Communication

There are problems that are inherent in many communications system and should be eliminated in the interest of effective communication if possible. If not, they will affect the smooth operation of an undertaking and may result in the management being ineffective, the organization's objective not being achieved and possibly leading to its eventual destruction. It is important to appreciate that an organization is made up of human beings and will only be successful if these human beings can communicate well with one another. Management must therefore, be aware of the problems which can cause failure in communications. These include:

i) Use of an inappropriate medium: It has already been established that there are many communication media that an organization can use. If an unsuitable method is used to send a message, that message may be delayed, not received or misunderstood. For example a microfilm sent to a department where there are no facilities for viewing it, is not going to serve the purpose of communication.

ii) Use of language that the recipient does not understand: This is particularly important in international communication. Delay will occur while an interpreter is used.

iii) Use of ambiguous words and phrases: Many words and phrases in common use have a number of different meanings. Their use will increase the risk of a message being misunderstood by the recipient, therefore, their use should be avoided.
iv) **Redundancy**: The term redundancy in communication theory refers to that part of a message which can be disposed of without affecting its meaning. In other words, messages contain two parts:

a) The part which is essential in the message being correctly interpreted and understood. i.e., the vital part.

b) The part which, although included, is not necessary for interpretation in the meaning of the message i.e., the redundant part.

Redundancy in a message increases the cost in sending the message. Eventually it may prove to be completely misunderstood and rejected.

v) **Information overload**: A communication system has a physical limit as to how much information it can communicate at any given time. Equally, a human being has a limit to the amount of messages he or she can send or receive at any given time. If too many messages are passed through a communication system or to and from a single person at the same time, they may get confused with one another; the person himself gets exhausted and disheveled and ultimately abandon the communication, leading to a grinding halt. The messages in these cases either remain in a confused manner or gets distorted with contamination with messages. Therefore, steps must be taken to avoid information overload, by saying or receiving one at a time. May be waiting devices can be introduced, or well chalked out pre-plan may be carried out for sending or receiving messages.

vi) **Noise**: Noise can be either internal or external. The external factors are the ones existing in the environment or the media through which the message is to be sent. The noise will hamper in the reception of the message. These factors affect during oral communication. Example of such noise distractions are the crackling on the telephone, background noise of the office, loud music from adjacent areas, a third party interrupting the conversation, or this may be technical disturbance in the radio and television transmission.

Internal noise refers to the psychological set up of the individuals who are taking part in the communication. The sender should be free from any psychological pressure, pre-occupation, stress or threat. On the other hand the receiver should also be free from these psychological pressures.

vii) **Emotional and psychological factors**: People having strong attitudes and feelings are not easily affected by the message received, because they do not conform to their beliefs. Hence they tend to reject or refuse such messages. Similarly, the sender may also distort messages according to his beliefs and ideals and therefore distorts the original message.

viii) **Mistrust between participants**: Mistrust on the part of both the sender and the receiver will seriously affect in the communication because the content of the message will be misinterpreted. This is normally seen in industrial conflicts, conflicts between employer and employee and between two opposition parties because each party distrust each other.

ix) **Laziness**: This is a serious factor when the sender fails to assume and perform his duties as desired. He may deliberately delay the sending of the message either presuming that the receiver is in the knowledge of the message or deliberately he may tamper the message.

x) **Local dialects**: India is a diverse country with various culture, language and dialects. Words may have a different meaning in language and dialects. Therefore the sender should be aware of these facts before sending a message meant for someone who do not share the same language.
xi) **Work overload:** When the participants in a communication process are performing under any type of stress or pressure of work, the effectiveness of the communication is reduced. Fatigue results owing to overload. The stress inherent in the nature of work or job also has a direct bearing on the effectiveness of communication. This can be best understood when the nurses and doctors handle emergencies every day under stress of work overload.

xii) **Climate:** The work climate may pose as a barrier to communication. The working environment, the colleagues with whom a person is working, the inter-personal relationship which is existing in the work setting, interference of the superiors, will greatly hamper the work climate.

Communication analysis identifies that the ‘style’ of message having certain connotations like evaluation, control neutrality, superiority makes the climate defensive instead of supportive, causing communication barriers. For example, if the style of the message from the superior is in the form of evaluation, “the receiver will be on the defensive which will deter effective communication, as the receiver will perceive negative hidden communication”.

xiii) **Lengthy communication chains:** One feature of communication channel is that the greater the number of people a message has to be passed along, the more are the chances of the message being distorted. Each person in the chain is likely to perceive the message in his own way and pass it in the manner in which he understood. As a result, the original receiver gets a distorted message. Therefore, long communication chains should be avoided in an organization.

xiv) **An individual’s perception:** Every human being has a character that is formed by knowledge, experience, culture and background. This in turn affects how a person understands a message that is being communicated to him. There is no way, the sender of the message can be certain of the interpretation the recipient will place upon it or how he/she will react to it. An effective communicator will appreciate the fact that individuals will perceive matters differently and should always account for this in the messages he sends. He should take into consideration the knowledge and ability of the recipient and avoid using words and phrases that are beyond the recipient’s understanding.

Distortions in communication can arise from limitations connected with each of the elements of communication system.

### 1.7.2 Barriers Related to the Elements of Communication

i) **Sender**

It is the sender who initiates the process of communication. Unless he is clear about the objective of the communication and the central idea of the message, he will not be able to formulate or encode the message. Irrelevant information dilutes the core meaning and adversely affects the message. The sender’s capacity to determine exactly what he wants to convey, his skill in formulation the message properly and his decision to use a particular medium for transmission are known to influence the degree of communication effectiveness. Since individuals differ in their capabilities, so does their capacity to carry on effective communication. Roles played by individuals regulate the efficiency of communication between two or more persons. The discrepancy if any, between the ascribed role of the sender and the role he actually plays while communication can vitiate communication. The interpretation of the role of the sender serves the purpose of clarifying the verbal, gestural and action messages that are consciously conveyed to the receiver. Effective communication also
envisages empathy on the part of the sender which enables him to place himself in the receiver’s position. If, while formulating the message he ignores the intellectual level, background and interests of the receiver, effectiveness of communication goes down considerably.

ii) **Encoding Messages**

People communicate with others through codes and their messages are signals that are coded in various pre-arranged ways. Encoding refers to the technical process the message is put into the proper code of words, gesture, language or media so that it takes a mutually understandable term. The use of words which could have contradictory meanings are examples of poor encoding. Failure on the part of the sender in considering the knowledge and abilities of the receiver while encoding the message will prove as a barrier of the communication. No effective communication can take place unless the codified language is fully understood by the receiver.

iii) **Transmission**

In the process of transmission by speech, the role of hearing arises on the part of the receiver. This will demand for clarity of voice as well as language from the sender. Similarly, when a written communication is sent in a stylish or illegible handwriting it will be unreadable for the receiver.

iv) **Reception and Decoding**

The credibility of the communicator and the motives attributed to him has a profound influence on the reception of his message. Receiving of the messages can become a problem due to two factors viz. ‘noise’ in the channel and the ‘attitude of the receiver’. The former makes the reception of a complete message a difficult task and at times the missed portions may turn out to be highly important in deciphering the message. The receiver may also become the source of trouble if he is impatient, not attentive and willing and only chooses to hear or see the communication that suits his expectations. Proper decoding can also be badly affected if the receiver fails to perceive the feelings and emotions of the sender in the right perspective, or vests no trust on the sender and fails to empathize the whole matter.

v) **Receiver**

Finally it is the receiver who can actually make the importance of, the meaning of a message. This will be an attribution of his personal characteristics. Instead of receiving the message objectively, if he starts evaluating the sender, rejects a portion of the message which are at variance with his own beliefs and opinions, or interprets the information in a subjective fashion, he is likely to cause a lot of distortion in the message while decoding. His capacity to understand and to interpret messages in proper context is a basic requirement failing which it remains as an obstacle to communication.

It is thus clear that communication is impeded by three broad types of barriers—**physical, personal (psycho-social) and semantic**. Physical barriers are environmental factors that prevent or reduce the effect of sending and receiving of communication. They include physical distance, distracting noise, and other interference. Personal barriers arise from judgements, emotions and values of the people. They cause a psychological distance between people. Psychological distance may prove to be more dangerous than any other factor because this will stop the communication in totality. Emotions act as filters in all communications. Semantic barriers arise from the limitations of the symbolic system (language, gesture, etc.) itself. Symbols usually have a variety of meanings and the sender has to use them judicially.
Let us now see what we understand by the Communication Media. There are many different methods which can be used to convey messages between participants. These different methods are known as communication media and fall into four basic categories which are as follows:

i) **Written** (hand written, typed or printed). The features of written messages are:
   a) They are permanent form and can be retained for future reference.
   b) They can be sent to remote locations by post, e-mail, hand post, telegram, etc.
   c) They can be produced in large quantities.
   d) They can be sent to large number of recipients simultaneously through circulars, newspapers, magazines, website, etc.
   e) Except through e-mail the method is slow.
   f) They can be intercepted by unintended parties; hence if the message is of confidential nature it should be protected either by sealing it or by sending it in a coded form.

ii) **Oral** (face to face conversation, telephone conversation, etc.). The features of this method of communication are:
   a) It is spontaneous. The time taken for the whole process of communication to be carried out is very short and need not be planned. A response is immediate.
   b) The message can be transmitted either to one person, a group, a large audience or it can be broadcasted to millions through the radio transmission.
   c) No permanent record of the message is kept unless it is recorded electronically.
   d) It is a faster medium compared to the others.
   e) The message can be transmitted to remote locations by the use of telephone or radio broadcasting techniques.
   g) The message can be followed by a second message. For example, “do you understand?” question to see if the recipient has understood the original message. This normally happens in a class room teaching or a health teaching program.

iii) **Visual** (e.g., photographs, charts, and diagrams, signals, video films and micro films)

   The features of visual messages are:
   a) Language cannot be a problem if signs and signals are used effectively which could be understood by the recipient.
   b) Use of charts, photographs, films, etc. can be used for communication.
   c) Visuals can communicate colour, posture, movement, etc., and is useful in training.
   d) Visuals can be transmitted over distances through television and the websites.
   e) In case of telecasting and the use of websites the visuals may be seen by those for whom the message is not meant for.
iii) **Electronic** (e.g., computers): The features of this type of media are:
   a) They are fast and work like lightening.
   b) They are not ‘human’ and therefore not sensible enough. Thereby it needs a special translation ‘human’ device to derive a meaningful message.
   c) This is an expensive device, as special equipments are required. Therefore it is not feasible at all situations on economic grounds.
   d) Messages sent through the electronic medium need expertise and special knowledge to handle the messages to be sent and received. This cannot be done by ‘anyone’ and ‘everyone’.
   e) It is no doubt a fast developing medium and is being accepted by all.

It should be understood that it is possible to classify some communication media in more than one of the above groups e.g., the teleprinter, which is electronically operated written communication media. At times some messages need to be sent through more than one medium. For example, a purchase order may initially be made by the telephone followed by a written order for confirmation. It is the management to ensure the most suitable type of media being used to elicit the maximum output from the communication.

**Check Your Progress 4**

1) What do you understand by the word “communication media”?

2) Enumerate the four basic categories of Communication media.

3) What type of communication media is useful in the following situations:
   i) Teaching a group of pregnant women on the importance of:
      a) antenatal care including diet.
      b) taking tetanus toxoid at the appropriate time and dosage.
      c) teaching a group of mothers — how to recognize the signs of diarrhoeal dehydration in children.
ii) Communicating to the attending physician about a patient admitted in the ward that the condition of the patient has suddenly become serious.

iii) Teaching a group of nursing students how to:
   a) record and maintain temperature charts
   b) record and maintain intake and output charts
   c) write nurses’ notes
   d) patients’ night reports

iv) Communicating to your immediate superior that you need two days’ casual leave for an urgent personal work.

1.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have learnt about communication, process of communication and types of communication, barriers of communication and communication media.

Communication is the basis of all human interactions and in very simple terms, it is a transfer of information. Effective communication is when the receiver understands and interprets the message as has been sent.

In the health care delivery system it is essential to communicate and therefore as a nurse one should be well versed with the need of communication.

There are five essential elements and a series of phases in the communication process. The ‘source’, has a definite ‘message’ or information ‘encodes’ it and transmits through a ‘medium’ to the ‘receiver’ who ‘decodes’ or ‘interprets’ the message for understanding. The receiver receives the message and activates to respond starting the communication all over again but in the reverse direction. This is called ‘feedback’. The factors interfering with the communication process are termed as ‘Barriers of communication’ and one important factor is the ‘noise’.

Communication can be verbal or non-verbal. In the verbal communication word code is used either in written or oral form. The use of body language is non-verbal communication which is considered to have more impact on the receiver. An appropriate combination of verbal and non-verbal communication is a skill that every professional needs to practice in public dealing.

At any place of work the information flows both formally and informally. These are the two channels of communication. Structured and formally designed channels of communication developed for the purpose of the flow of information are called formal communication channels. Besides formal channels, we often see informal communication channels operating simultaneously in a working place. These channels have no official sanction of control and are referred as grapevine, through which information travels in all directions, irrespective of the levels and categories. Informal channels have both merits and demerits. Information flows faster through informal channels but the risk of flow of rumours and false information through it cannot be denied.

The factors which interfere with the effectiveness of communication are the barriers. They are related to the elements of communication, besides others which are not related to the elements at all. These barriers must be removed in order to make communication effective.

The communication media are the means through which the messages are transmitted. They are ‘written’, ‘oral’, ‘visual’ and the ‘electronic’ media.
### 1.10 KEY WORDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>The process of transmitting information such as thoughts, ideas, facts, through the use of language and symbols from one person to another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication Barriers</td>
<td>These are the elements that interfere with effective communication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication Channels</td>
<td>It is the line or structure which provides the direction for the flow of information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication Process</td>
<td>It is the series of elements and actions which are inter-connected for any communication to take place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapevine</td>
<td>This is an informal communication channel, where the gossip chain operates mostly.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### 1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) Communicate; Social
2) Receiving; information; understood; response
3) i) d  
   ii) b

**Check Your Progress 2**

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<td>i)</td>
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<td>iii)</td>
<td>a)</td>
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<td>iv)</td>
<td>c)</td>
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</table>

| 2)      |         |
| i)      | b)      |
| ii)     | d)      |

**Check Your Progress 3**

1) Vertical, horizontal, wheel, web
2) there is absence of good communication
3) upward, downward and sideways

**Check Your Progress 4**

1) The different methods used to convey messages between participants is known as communication media.
2) i) Written : includes hand written, typed, printed and faxed messages  
   ii) Oral : Face to face, telephone, radio, tape recorder
iii) Visual
   : Microfilms, photographs, overhead transparencies, black boards, charts and diagrams, slides, video films, films

iv) Electronic
   : Computers (web sites and e-mail through computers)

3) i) a) Oral and visual
    b) Oral and visual; if educated then written also
    c) Oral and visual; and if educated written also

ii) Oral and written

iii) Written, oral, visual and electronic if available

iv) Written followed by oral.

1.12 FURTHER READINGS


Woolf, Emile, Suresh Tanna and Karan Singh, *Organizational Management*. 