## Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology

## Communication Guidelines
## April 2014

### COMMUNICATION OVERVIEW

Effective, efficient communication is essential to meeting the clinical, educational and investigational goals of the Department. It seems prudent to therefore consider how to best use communication technology to our advantage.

The choice of the best communication modality should be based on the nature of the message and the urgency of communication. Although pagers and faxes are still in common use in medicine, email is the most common method of business communication. The goal should be to use the most efficient method for the given situation.

### MAXIMIZING COMMUNICATION EFFICIENCY

Regardless of the modality, SBAR is a very efficient method of communication, especially in issues related to patient care. The paradigm focuses on structuring the message to maximize efficient communication.

*Situation*: summarize the situation that necessitates the communication.
*Background*: summarize the background information necessary to put the issue in context.
*Assessment*: Your assessment of the situation including any objective information.
*Recommendation:* Your recommendation of how to respond to the situation given the background and assessment.

### WHAT WE USE AND WHEN WE SHOULD USE IT

**TELEPHONE/CELLPHONE**
Verbal communication provides the most direct and efficient way to communicate that minimizes opportunities for miscommunication. The down side is that cell phones can provide an interruption in some situations.

Issues that need a response in less than 24 hours should be pursued as a phone call.

Confidential communication is more secure by phone. Issues that require discussion between both parties can be more efficient by phone.

Verbal communication, whether in person or by phone, may be preferable for communication on controversial topics as it minimizes the possibility for miscommunication.

**TEXT MESSAGING**
The introduction of smart phones has created an amalgamation of email and cell phone that eliminates the interruptions of verbal cell phone use and offers the flexibility of email communication without a computer.

Text messages concerning work should be short informational transactions, mostly ones that require yes or no answers.

Ultimately, it is the employee and manager's relationship that determines whether work-related texting is acceptable.

**EMAIL**

Complex issues that require extensive background information are more easily conveyed in a written format.  Email is the most accessible written format we use in business.

Given the large role email plays, the Department can maximize efficient communication by agreeing to basic rules surrounding its use.

- Be concise. Longer messages are difficult to read, and most people will put them aside.
- Use a descriptive subject line. Avoid important and urgent.
- Don't send an email when emotional or angry. Sit on it for 24 hours.
- Avoid emoticons or textese. This should be reserved for personal email.
- Attachments should be used to provide background or supportive information, rather than as the primary message.
- Remember, email is not private. Don't put anything in email that you wouldn't "want the whole world to know about."
- Recipients should be chosen because they need to receive the message.
- Think twice before hitting reply all. Ask yourself, "Do all these other people really need to hear my reply?" If not, reply only to the original writer.
- Don't send a thank-you email in reply to a thank-you email.
- Proofread, proofread, proofread. Check for spelling, typos and word usage.
- Respond within 24 hours. If you require more time, let the sender know you're reviewing the email and when you'll get back to that person.
- Never use all caps or all lowercase.
- Out of Office messages should be sent as an automatic reply to people emailing you, rather than as blanket email to the Department.  They should note when you are unavailable and who can be contacted in your absence if there is a pressing issue. Proofread your out of office message.

If you have either a hospital or a Faculty of Medicine login and are using Outlook you can utilize the OBGYN Contact List.  This is maintained and updated on a regular basis and will be the most accurate contact information available.  Instructions on how to connect the OBGYN Contact List with your Outlook can be found under the heading "SharePoint Information" in the IT Resources section within the private section of the Department Website.  If you need to update someone's contact info contact Christine Niven.

If you do not use Outlook you can find the same contact information in the Department Directory on our website.  The most complete contact details are available when you login to the private site.

If you have general information to be shared with the entire Department, you may wish to convey this via the Website or Twitter.

**DEPARTMENT WEBSITE**

The website is compatible with just about any device or platform, from smart phones and tablets to laptops and desktops. Using a technique called Responsive Web Design the site adjusts or responds to a user's viewport making the design versatile regardless of operating system, browser, or device.

The Department Website has both public and private sections.

The private sections require a login.  If you do not have a login you can contact Christine Niven.  The private section of our site includes faculty profiles, on call schedules, rounds presentations, locum details, the Department Directory and a login page for the education database.

Faculty profiles include contact details and information on teaching and research activities. If you are a faculty member and have not updated your profile in some time we encourage you to do so. If you need assistance with this, please contact the administrative support for your division in the first instance.

If you would like to add or remove content or if you'd like to add a story or event to our site, contact Andi Martin.

**TWITTER**

While Twitter may offer a viable means to develop publicity for the Department, the social networking facet makes it an inappropriate communication modality for departmental work due to the need to protect patient privacy. However it is an effective means of providing non-confidential departmental information to a targeted group.

You can find the Department here: https://twitter.com/ubcOBGYN.  If you're new to Twitter, you may wish to explore the Twitter Help Center. We would like to encourage you to 'follow' the Department on Twitter.  Our long term goal is that we communicate with the Department more via the website and twitter.

If you have an event or announcement you would like to Tweet please contact Andi Martin.

**RESEARCHGATE**

This is a social networking site described as an amalgamation of Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for scientists and researchers to share papers, ask and answer questions, and find collaborators.

ResearchGate contains useful information about journals, such as impact factors, metrics and some details of open access policy – in this respect it is useful for bringing information together into one place.

The Department would like to encourage all faculty to become a member of ResearchGate.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding our communication guidelines please contact the Administrative Manager, Andi Martin.