

# Ensuring Safety and Avoiding Catastrophe in Telephone Nursing

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# Objectives

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## Telephone Nursing:

- Discuss the role of nurse
- Identify the standards of practice
- Describe the risks associated with the practice
- Identify strategies to reduce the risks

# The role of the nurse and the telephone

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- ▶ Triage and Advice
- ▶ Coordinate Care
- ▶ Patient Education or Preparation
- ▶ Discharge or Procedure Follow-up



# Symptom-based Calls

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## Telephone Triage:

A component of telephone nursing practice that focuses on assessment, prioritization, and referral to the appropriate level of care.

...involves identifying the nature and urgency of client health care needs and determining appropriate disposition. Greenberg et al, 2003



# Standards

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## Professional

- Basic Nursing
- Ethical

## Legal/regulatory

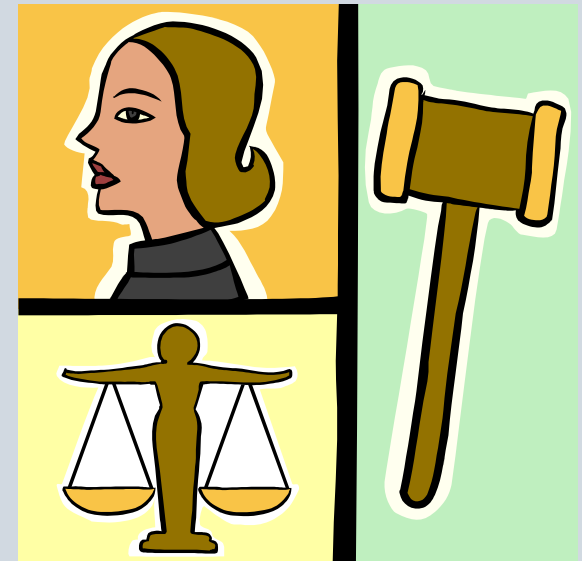
## Organizational



# Risks associated with nursing over the telephone

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- Assessment/Communication
- Decision-making
- Output
- Organizational



# Assessment/Communication

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## Ensure Safety

- Connect with caller
- Perform adequate assessment

## Risk Management Strategies

- Use open ended questions
- Always speak to patient
- Systematically assess
- Listen
- Don't accept patient diagnosis
- Don't jump to conclusion
- Validate findings

# Decision Making

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## Ensure Safety

- Identify nature and urgency
- Use critical thinking and nursing judgment

## Risk Management Strategies

- Use DSTs appropriately
- Avoid over-reliance on DST
- Listen and think
- Look outside the box



# Output

*Nursing interventions designed to meet caller needs* (Greenberg, 2009)

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## **Ensure Safety**

- Disposition appropriate for assessment
- Err on side of caution
- Use critical thinking and nursing judgment

## **Risk Management Strategies**

- Collaborate with caller
- Ensure caller understanding
- Ensure comfort with plan
- Document

# Organizational Policies

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## **Ensure Safety**

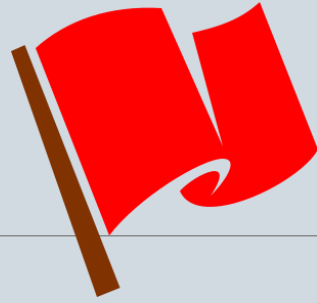
- Competent nurses
- Adequate resources
- Appropriate tools

## **Risk Management Strategies**

- Nurse education/orientation
- Document tool
- Safety centered policies
- QA/QI program

# Red Flags

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- Repeat callers
- Frequent fliers
- Concerned parents/caregivers
- Sudden onset/Sudden change
- “Severe” anything
- Extremes of age
- Comorbidities

# References

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# Thank-you!!

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