

OASIS Alert

Give Your Communication Techniques a Check Up

Put an end to phone tag.

Already using an SBAR tool to plan your communication with physicians? You may still be able to make improvements. **Pat Jump** with Rice Lake, Wis.-based **Acorn's End Training & Consulting** offers these guidelines.

Keep communication brief but informative. Physicians don't want to read a novel, they want the bottom line.

Make your request of the physician specific. For example, you could write, "Please call me to verify the Lasix dosage."

Make it easy for the physician to contact you. Telephone tag is very time-consuming and frustrating. Leaving your cell phone number for the physician's return call is one way to head off this problem. If you don't have a cell phone, give the physician the best time of the day to reach you. For example, you could leave the message that you will be at a particular number from noon to 1:00 PM and again from 4 to 5 p.m.

Take the return call yourself. Ideally, the clinician with the question or concern should be the one to take the physician's return call. If this isn't possible, make sure the clinician taking the return call is fully informed about the issue. Physicians report that it is very frustrating to call back and have someone say "I don't know anything about this."

Arrange back-up. If you had planned to take a call at a certain time of the day and then something unexpected happens to make this impossible, contact another clinician who can take the call. Inform that clinician of the situation and don't forget to tell the receptionist to re-route the call to your back-up.