

## **Leadership and Programme Management in Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)**

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### **Abstract:**

Leadership is widely considered to be vital for infection prevention and control (IPC). Its purpose is to maintain progress in the reduction of risks of healthcare-associated infections, especially those caused by antimicrobial-resistant organisms, and to achieve continuous quality improvement. The terms ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ are often used interchangeably in relation to the organization and delivery of health care. Greater conceptual clarity could prompt consideration of what is needed for IPC

**Keywords:**Leadership, infection prevention and control

### **Defining leadership in IPC**

"Leadership describes the ability to influence, motivate, and enable members of an organization to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organization"

An IPC leader should seek to continuously improve implementation of IPC programmes and all core components. Leader has to use soft skills to influence multimodal strategies to:

- **Build** a system (including infrastructures) that supports IPC practices.
- **Teach** others about IPC.
- **Check** that your organization is doing the right thing at the right time.
- **Sell** it to others and keep them interested in adopting and maintaining excellent IPC practices.
- **Live** it by embedding excellent IPC practices across your organization’s culture.

### **Types of leadership**

The characteristics of a leader also relate to their leadership style.

### **Situational leadership**

Situational leaders adapt their leadership style to individual situations. This type of leadership is based on a relationship between the leader's supportive and directive behaviour and the follower's levels of development. This leadership style requires personal involvement, sustained communication, and emotional support.

#### **Characteristics of Situational leaders:**

- ❖ Situational leaders are fluid and able to adapt their leadership to a given situation, to the resources available, and the strengths and weaknesses of the team.
- ❖ These leaders are willing, and interested, in investing time and energy communicating and providing support.

#### **Examples of situational leaders:**

- Mahatma Gandhi
- Margaret Thatcher
- Colin Powell.

### **Transformational leadership**

Transformational leaders are less relational and emotional in their interactions with followers. They thrive on developing and communicating a vision and empowering followers to embrace that vision.

#### **Characteristics of Transformational Leader:**

- ❖ Transformational leaders motivate their followers by appealing to their ideals, empowering and inspiring them to use their own beliefs and personal strengths.
- ❖ Have the ability to inspire change in their followers so that they become more effective and engaged.
- ❖ They have and share a vision for what an organization should and could be.

#### **Examples of transformational leaders:**

- Nelson Mandela
- Martin Luther King Jr.
- Mother Teresa.

### **Transactional leadership**

Transactional leaders are more focused on the analytical aspects of their role. This includes evaluation, measurement, and standardization aligned with performance. They are focused on the evaluation, training, and correction of subordinates. They are often driven by mandates from higher leaders.

#### **Characteristics of Transactional Leader:**

- The transactional leader values hierarchy, and may be a visible leader at the top of the chain.
- These leaders function within a clear chain of command, motivating their followers through reward and punishment.

#### **Examples of transactional leaders:**

- Bill Gates
- Charles de Gaulle.

### **IPC focal person key roles and tasks**

The IPC focal person is a builder and nurturer. It is their duty, as the IPC focal person, to develop and sustain many coordinated activities that promote safety and quality of care for staff and patients.

#### **As a builder:**

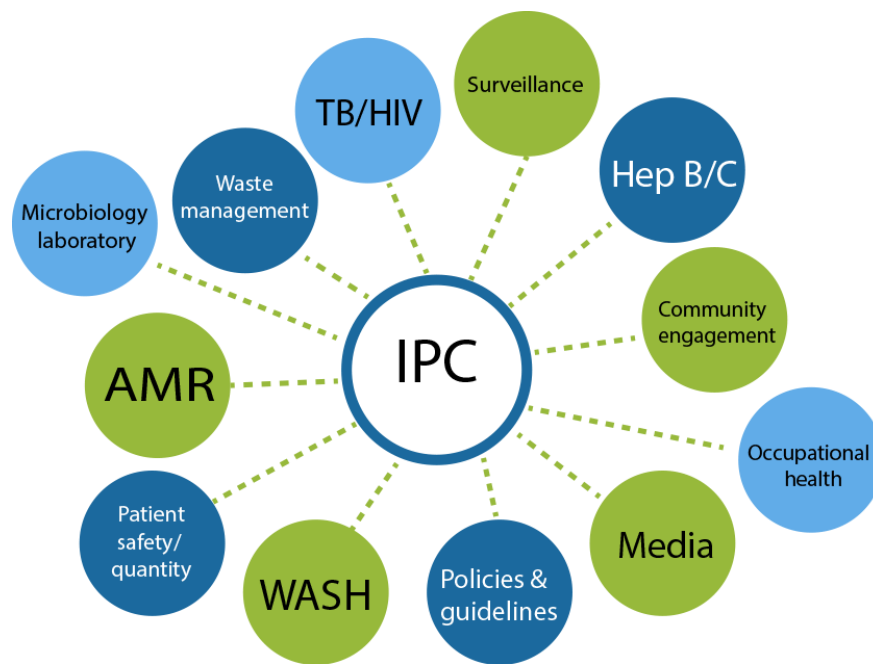
- Develop, implement, coordinate, and evaluate the IPC programme.
- Develop and support implementation of IPC activities at facility or district levels.
- Develop, update, and manage IPC strategies, guidelines, and all tools and resources.
- Develop surveillance systems for HAI, etc. in collaboration with epidemiologists and surveillance team.

#### **As a nurturer:**

- Liaise with relevant hospital/district departments to ensure integration of IPC activities.
- Audit and monitor progress of facility IPC plan.

- Interpret and communicate data on infrastructure, process, and practice indicators for decision-makers.
- Sustain IPC workforce through training.
- Raise awareness of HAI and AMR among the public and health care professionals.
- Offer advice about IPC supplies, technical specifications, and procurement systems.

### **Programmes/services that may tie in with IPC:**



### **Communication as a skill in IPC:**

Effective communication is another critical skill an IPC leader needs. Many situations in IPC require effective interpersonal communication. Whether the leader implementing a new way of doing things, dealing with infection outbreaks, providing feedback of an IPC assessment, convincing senior managers about the importance of investing in IPC, or aiming at modifying behaviors of health professionals and patients, effective communication is required for a successful IPC programme or project. Good communication allows people to speak and be listened to, ask questions, and express thoughts without interruption in an understandable manner.

### **Effective ways to communicate within an IPC programme are:**

- ❖ Develop leaflets for patients and family members or staff.
- ❖ Lead multidisciplinary teams during outbreak investigations.
- ❖ Report to hospital management on performance indicators.
- ❖ Respond to journalists about hospital performance or an event (an outbreak).
- ❖ Present a successful hand hygiene programme at a conference.
- ❖ Advocate for more resources (including an IPC budget).

### **Elements essential in the process of communicating information:**

#### **The Players**

The people involved may include the recipients of an innovation you would like to implement or the targets of a behavior you would like to change.

#### **The Exchange**

Make sure that the messages you communicate are clear and concise. Different audiences may perceive or interpret messages in different ways. Choose the most effective channels and methods of communication.

#### **The Channel**

Selecting the right channel for a given audience will be the most effective way to communicate.

#### **The Noise**

Noise can refer to unnecessary words, pictures, sounds, or graphics that don't support your message.

#### **The Context**

In addition to choosing how the message is communicated, must focus on other contextual factors. This may include when, how often, to whom, and for how long you should communicate your message.

#### **The Feedback**

A good way to determine if the messaging has been effective is to ask for feedback. You can supply a phone number, email address, survey, or comment card to collect information from recipients.

## The Impact

Analyze the impact your messaging has made on the community you intended to influence. Feedback is a good way to collect this data, as well as observation and conducting surveys.

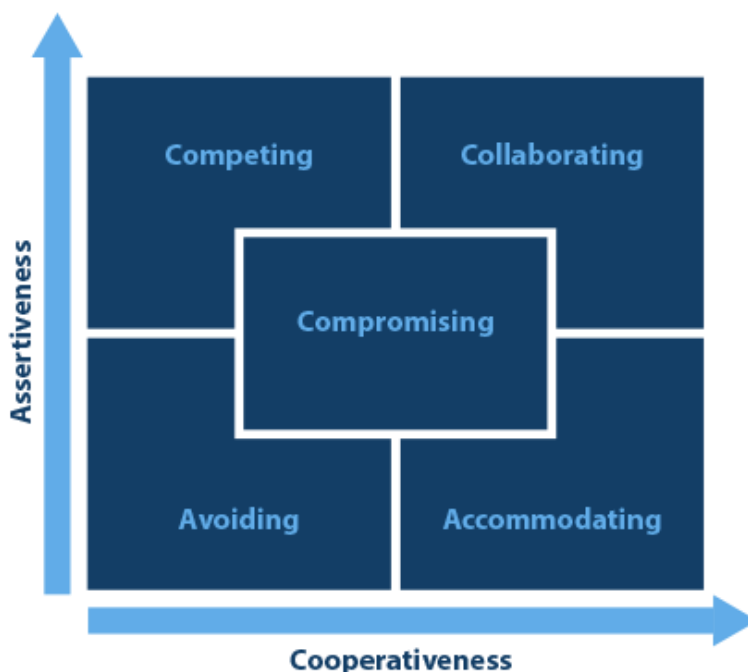
## Managing conflict as an essential skill in IPC:

Another important skill for IPC leaders is knowing how to manage conflicts. When introducing a systemic change, such as introducing a new guideline, conflicts may arise. For example, introducing a new wound dressing technique could threaten the status quo.

According to Barki&Hartwick, conflict is “A dynamic process between individuals and/or groups as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of goals.

## Handling conflict

Based on the different combinations of assertiveness and cooperativeness, Ken Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five modes of responding to conflict.



### **Competing**

When a difficult situation calls for a quick decision, competing is an effective approach. If there is time is the most pressing factor, the leader may need to assert power to achieve the best outcome. This can be an unpopular, but necessary way to handle a problem. You may feel that you are “throwing your weight around”, and others may perceive your actions negatively.

### **Collaborating**

A collaborative approach to conflict resolution means that both parties agree to a new solution. This means that the parties involved must be willing to engage to find a solution that works for everyone. This highly assertive, highly cooperative approach is best used when parties involved are comfortable with ambiguity.

### **Avoiding**

Avoiding is an approach to consider when a confrontation may cause more harm than good. The leader may delegate the task of resolving the conflict to another member of the team as an exercise in team building or a lesson in leadership. However, this may be seen as avoiding responsibility, or being unproductive.

### **Accommodating**

It may be more important to give up power in a situation rather than harm a good working relationship. The leader may choose to be accommodating when maintaining peace or creating goodwill is the more important outcome. This approach, while very cooperative, is unassertive. It may be productive in the moment, but may prevent the people involved from finding a more creative solution to the problem.

### **Compromising**

As a strategy, compromise can best be described as “meeting in the middle”. Together, both parties work to find a mutually acceptable decision. This approach is somewhat assertive, somewhat cooperative. While compromising is a good middle of the road option, keep in mind more creative solutions may be neglected for both parties to agree on a solution.

### **Summary:**

As you develop IPC teams and projects, you will need effective communication skills. Describing project objectives, advocating for IPC, providing feedback, training, and interacting with team members are all activities that require this skill. Develop clear and concise messaging that is specific to your audience. Use the communication channels that are most likely to reach

the right recipients. Conflict is bound to arise when large-scale changes are made. Often times, conflict can provide an opportunity to creatively solve a problem.

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