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Enhancing patient safety outcomes through SBAR communication: A systematic review

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Abstract

Background: SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) is a structured communication framework designed to facilitate the logical and efficient transfer of information among healthcare professionals. This method supports the identification, assessment, and management of patient risks. Ineffective communication is a leading contributor to patient safety incidents; therefore, implementing structured communication like SBAR is essential for enhancing the quality and safety of healthcare delivery.

Purpose: To explore and analyze the impact of SBAR communication on improving the effectiveness of patient safety within healthcare settings.

Method: A systematic review approach in accordance with the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. A thorough search was conducted across multiple scholarly databases—Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar—using the keywords: "SBAR AND communication AND healthcare AND facilities."

Results: The implementation of SBAR enhances healthcare workers' communication competencies, fosters a safer and more reassuring environment for patients, and contributes positively to the overall quality of care.

Conclusion: SBAR is a communication tool that promotes timely, accurate, complete, and clear information exchange, thereby supporting the effectiveness of patient safety practices in healthcare services.

Keywords: Communication; Patient Safety; SBAR.

INTRODUCTION

Patient safety is a crucial component of delivering high-quality healthcare services. Among the key factors influencing patient safety is the effectiveness of communication among healthcare professionals. Numerous incident reports have identified communication breakdowns as a major contributor to adverse events, including medication errors, delays in treatment, and even patient fatalities. The SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) communication method offers a structured, concise, and efficient approach to information exchange among health workers, which helps reduce miscommunication, supports timely clinical decisions, and enhances patient safety.

SBAR enables healthcare providers to deliver essential information clearly: describing the patient's

current condition (Situation), presenting relevant medical history (Background), analyzing the present status (Assessment), and suggesting the next course of action (Recommendation). This approach is especially beneficial during emergencies and routine interactions between nurses and physicians. Moreover, SBAR fosters a culture of open, collaborative, and professional communication—vital for ensuring safe, quality-driven care. Its application helps improve the accuracy of information exchange, facilitates teamwork, and supports better clinical outcomes.

SBAR has been widely adopted across various healthcare settings, such as hospitals, emergency units, and maternity services. As its use grows, evaluating its effectiveness becomes increasingly

important. Systematic reviews of previous studies can offer insights into how SBAR contributes to patient safety. Structured communication methods like SBAR not only reduce medical errors but also promote trust and patient engagement, which are key to therapeutic relationships and adherence to care (Lakoma & Kim, 2014).

A recent study focusing on SBAR implementation among nurses in special inpatient hospitals found positive outcomes, particularly in the 'Situation' aspect. SBAR reduced communication errors and increased patient satisfaction. To ensure its continued success, hospital nursing management should monitor its application during handovers—especially in internal medicine units—by providing education and training. Nurses are encouraged to apply SBAR thoroughly and according to established procedures. Further studies are recommended to explore additional factors affecting handover practices and to improve the overall quality of nursing services (Irawati, Widodo, & Yulian, 2025; Suryani, Mulyanti, & Wahyuni, 2024).

Nurses reported that SBAR positively influenced shift coordination and teamwork. Although some considered it time-consuming, no adverse events were observed during its use, and the willingness of nurses to continue using SBAR reflects its potential for broader adoption. Therefore, regular training and ongoing evaluations are essential for optimizing communication in nursing care (Pazar, Kavakli, Ak, & Erten, 2024).

In other contexts, SBAR has also proven effective in supporting prostate cancer patients by enhancing self-management, reducing emotional distress, and improving quality of life. By facilitating structured communication between healthcare professionals and patients, SBAR strengthens emotional support and encourages shared decision-making—making it suitable for integration into more holistic, patient-centered clinical practices (Yu, Liu, Li, & Zhou, 2025).

However, a pilot study revealed that many healthcare professionals still lack adequate knowledge about SBAR, even though they demonstrate a positive attitude toward its use. This gap can hinder effective interdisciplinary communication. To address this, collaboration between healthcare managers and professionals is essential, supported by investments in training and education from institutions such as universities and

hospitals (Toumi, Dhouib, Zouari, Ghadhab, Gara, & Zoukar, 2024).

This review seeks to deepen understanding of SBAR's role in promoting patient safety and to offer evidence-based insights for improving clinical practice and policy. In high-risk healthcare environments, the adoption of structured, systematic communication methods like SBAR is critical for conveying essential information clearly and logically—particularly in urgent situations and during patient handovers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This systematic review adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. A comprehensive literature search was conducted using several academic databases, including Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar.

Eligible studies were those published between 2014 and 2024, focusing on the implementation of the SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) communication technique within healthcare settings. The review adopted a quantitative approach to examine and synthesize relevant variables from the selected studies, ensuring methodological rigor and the validity of findings.

The inclusion criteria encompassed studies that investigated the use of SBAR communication in healthcare services, with healthcare professionals as the primary participants. Exclusion criteria included articles that were limited to abstracts, lacked full-text availability, or were published in languages other than English.

The literature search employed specific keywords, namely: "SBAR AND communication AND healthcare AND facilities." Filters were applied to restrict results to freely accessible full-text articles written in English. The initial search yielded 8,151 records. Following the removal of duplicates and the application of exclusion criteria—such as language, study design (e.g., cohort or cross-sectional studies), and article type—a total of 8,122 records were excluded. Ultimately, 29 full-text articles met the inclusion criteria and were incorporated into the final analysis. These articles were systematically reviewed with attention to research relevance, objectives, methodologies, findings, and conclusions.

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RESEARCH RESULTS

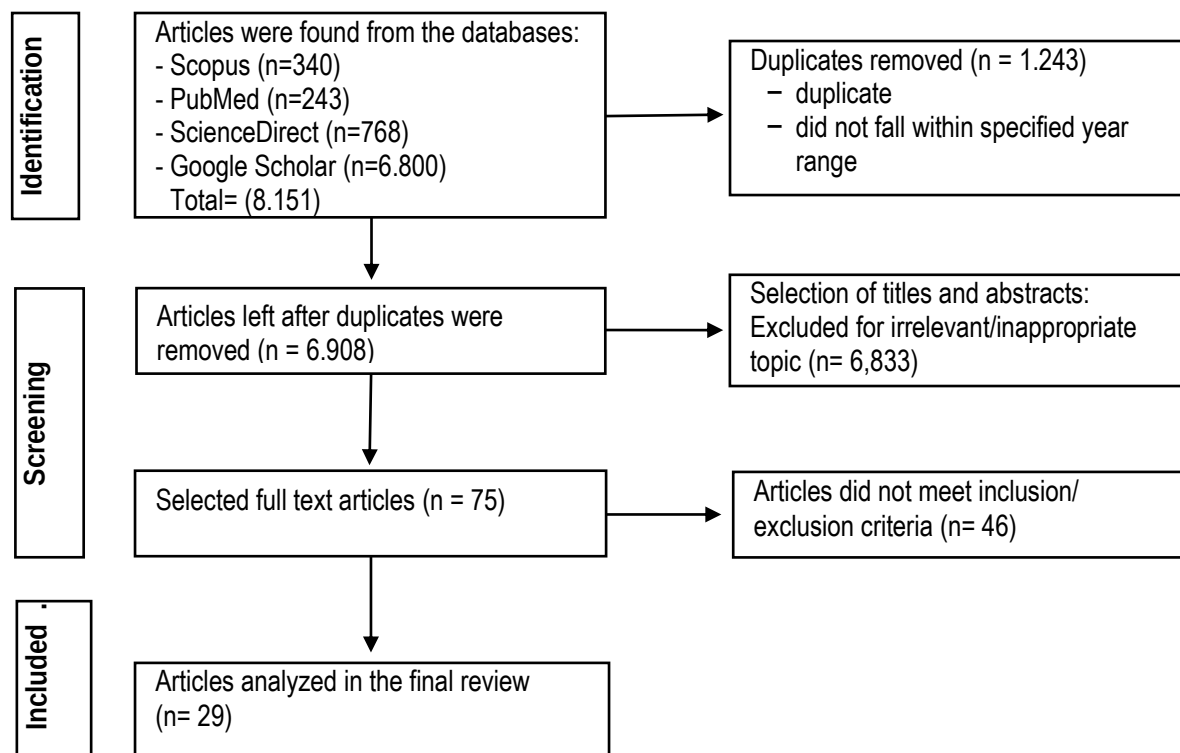


Figure Prisma Flow Diagram

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Table Summary of the Review Articles

(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
(Ting et al. 2017) (Taiwan)	To examine the impact of the use of the SBAR communication method on the safety attitudes of staff in the obstetrics department.	Quasi-experimental research with pretest-posttest design.	Showing a significant improvement in SAQ scores post-implementation of SBAR, especially on teamwork and patient safety perception. SBAR has been shown to be effective in improving clinical communication and safety culture, and is recommended in obstetric services to prevent the risk of miscommunication.
(Siokal et al., 2023) (Indonesia)	To review the effect of the implementation of effective communication by nurses on patient satisfaction through a literature review.	Literature review of articles	Effective nurse communication, such as active listening, providing empathy, and clear explanations, has been shown to significantly increase patient satisfaction. This shows the importance of communication training in improving the quality of nursing services
(Haig et al., 2006). (United States)	To describe the application of SBAR as a shared communication model to improve patient safety.	Descriptive report or practice-based report based on SBAR implementation in a clinical context.	The implementation of SBAR improves the consistency of communication between professions, reduces miscommunication, and forms mutual understanding within the patient care team. SBAR is recognized as an essential tool in creating safety and efficiency in clinical communication.
(Ammouri et al., 2015) (Oman)	To assess nurses' perceptions of patient safety culture and identify areas that need improvement in the hospital environment.	Descriptive quantitative research	Showing a positive perception of nurses towards teamwork, but the aspects of incident reporting and non-punitive responses were still low. The study emphasizes the importance of open communication and secure reporting systems to strengthen the overall patient safety culture in healthcare facilities.

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
(Ulumiyah, 2018) (Indonesia)	To analyze the improvement of the quality of health services through the implementation of patient safety programs at health centers	Descriptive research with a qualitative approach.	Effective implementation of patient safety improves service quality through proper identification, incident reporting, and communication. Its success is supported by management commitment and staff training, but it is constrained by limited resources and an uneven understanding of patient safety culture.
(Al-Yahyai et al., 2021) (Oman)	To examine the importance of using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) techniques in helping communicate with critical patients who are unable to speak.	Literature-based descriptive qualitative study (narrative review)	Intubated or critical patients often feel frustrated and isolated. The use of AAC techniques, such as communication boards and cues, helps to express the patient's needs. This strategy improves patient communication, satisfaction, and safety. Nurse training in AAC is essential for optimal clinical outcomes and empathy.
(Rudberg et al., 2023) (Sweden)	To explore the dynamics of interprofessional communication in psychiatric outpatient units and how those communication practices affect clinical team collaboration.	Qualitative research with an ethnographic approach.	Interprofessional communication takes place formally, informally, and in writing, but is often hampered by organizational structure, role limitations, and time pressures. Informal communication bridges the gap between professions, even though it risks missing out on important information. Reflective spaces and collaborative structures are needed to improve patient safety.
(Cam et al., 2023) (Sweden)	To explore health care workers' views on the challenges and factors influencing communication in the discharge process of elderly patients from hospital.	Exploratory qualitative research	Communication during the repatriation of the elderly is complex due to the involvement of many parties and lack of coordination. Barriers include time constraints, overlapping responsibilities, and unclear medical information. The importance of an integrated

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
			communication system, detailed documentation, and patient and family involvement is emphasized.
(Strong et al., 2021). (Australia)	To evaluate the results of rapid digital transformation in large-scale communication systems in healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia.	A mixed-method descriptive study	Rapid digital transformation enables faster and more coordinated communication across health systems, including increased use of online platforms, mass notifications, and crisis management systems. However, challenges arise in the form of additional workloads, lack of initial training, and the need for more adaptive and inclusive systems. The study concludes that digital transformation provides great benefits in crisis response, but its sustainability requires investment in training, infrastructure, and user engagement
(Müller et al., 2018). (Germany)	To assess the impact of the use of SBAR communication tools on patient safety through a systematic review of relevant studies.	Systematic review.	The use of SBAR improves communication between professionals, standardization of documentation, and patient safety. However, the quality of the evidence still varied from moderate to low. More high-quality experimental research is needed to ensure the effectiveness of SBAR in a wide range of healthcare contexts across the board.
(Hilda et al., 2018) (Indonesia)	To analyze the influence of the application of the SBAR communication method	Quantitative research with pre-experimental design, one-group pretest-posttest approach	The implementation of SBAR improves staff communication, incident reporting, and clinical risk awareness, thereby strengthening the culture of patient safety. SBAR is effective in handover between shifts. Studies recommend regular training and managerial support to ensure the continued and consistent implementation of SBAR.

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
(Ryan et al., 2019). (Ireland)	To investigate whether safety briefings have a positive impact on patient safety in acute hospital settings through a systematic literature review	Systematic review	Safety briefings improve team communication, situational awareness, and clinical risk detection, as well as lower safety incidents such as medical errors and patient falls. Success depends on the organization's culture, leadership support, and staff engagement. Further experimental research is needed to corroborate the evidence of its impact on patient safety.
(Stewart, 2016) (United States)	To evaluate the effectiveness of the use of the SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) communication method in improving patient safety.	Literature review	SBAR improves the clarity, efficiency, and consistency of communication between health workers. Some studies have noted a decrease in medical errors and an increase in patient safety, although effectiveness varies. SBAR is considered effective in supporting a safety culture, but requires structured implementation and strong managerial support.
(Petersson et al., 2015) (Sweden)	To evaluate the impact of the use of the SBAR communication model on the effectiveness of communication between health workers in the context of clinical services.	Pilot study (clinical intervention study) with quantitative and qualitative approaches.	The use of SBAR improves the structure and clarity of communication between healthcare professionals. Participants reported that SBAR helped reduce miscommunication and improve teamwork efficiency. This study recommends further SBAR training as well as the integration of SBAR in clinical practice as part of a strategy to improve patient safety.
(Brock et al., 2013) (United States)	To evaluate the effectiveness of interprofessional education (IPE) in improving team communication skills as a key strategy in improving patient safety.	Descriptive studies with quantitative and qualitative approaches.	IPE training significantly improved communication skills, understanding of interprofessional roles, and team collaboration. Participants stated increased confidence and efficiency in communicating during patient care. This

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
			study emphasizes the importance of integrating IPE training in the health profession curriculum to strengthen a culture of patient safety and cross-professional teamwork.
(Mohamed et al., 2024) (Sudan)	To evaluate the level of knowledge of nurses regarding bedside shift reports in critical care units.	Descriptive quantitative research with survey design.	Most nurses had moderate to high knowledge of bedside shift reports. However, advanced training is needed in effective communication, confidentiality, and documentation. Studies recommend regular training and supportive policies so that bedside handover is implemented consistently to improve the quality of patient care.
(Shinta et al., 2024) (Indonesia)	To systematically review the implementation of SBAR communication methods in the context of patient safety in various health care facilities.	Literature review	The SBAR method significantly improved the effectiveness of communication between healthcare workers, accelerated clinical decision-making, and lowered the risk of medical errors. This article emphasizes that the successful implementation of SBAR depends on ongoing training, institutional policy support, and a strong safety culture in healthcare facilities.
(Siauta et al., 2024) (Indonesia)	To design a digital-based communication application with the SBAR method to increase the effectiveness of patient handover at Undata Hospital.	Research development of user trials	SBAR-based digital application design can improve the clarity of communication flows during handovers, reduce the potential for loss of important information, and improve the efficiency of time and documentation. Users state that the app is easy to use and helps in supporting patient safety. Studies recommend a broader scale implementation accompanied by regular training.

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
(Abrishami et al., 2024) (Iran)	To evaluate the effect of SBAR and FMEA-based patient safety training on the level of self-efficacy and patient safety culture in hospitals.	Quantitative research with experimental design.	SBAR and FMEA training improve health workers' self-efficacy and adherence to safety culture. These interventions strengthen clinical communication and safe decision-making. It is recommended to expand the training to other units to improve overall patient safety.
(Yu et al., 2025) (China)	To evaluate the effectiveness of the SBAR communication system in improving the clinical outcomes and experience of prostate cancer patients.	Retrospective, comparative research	The implementation of SBAR significantly improves the effectiveness of interprofessional communication, reduces miscommunication, and improves patient satisfaction and comfort. Also noted was an increase in adherence to clinical safety procedures. Studies suggest wider adoption of SBAR in oncology and men's healthcare.
(Pakpahan, 2025) (Indonesia)	To provide an overview of the implementation of SBAR communication techniques in the inpatient room, as well as assess its effectiveness in supporting patient safety	Observational quantitative descriptive	Most nurses had implemented SBAR communication quite well, especially in the "S" (Situation) and "B" (Background) aspects. However, aspects "A" (Assessment) and "R" (Recommendation) still require additional training. SBAR has been proven to help improve team coordination and accuracy in delivering information between shifts.
(Toumi et al., 2024) (Tunisia)	To evaluate the impact of the application of SBAR communication tools on patient safety in gynecology and obstetrics units as part of a pilot study.	Quantitative pilot study with pre-post intervention	The implementation of SBAR significantly improves staff's perception of safe and efficient communication, as well as encourages improved team coordination and clinical decision-making. Studies show that SBAR is an effective tool to improve patient safety culture in obstetric and obstetric facilities.

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
(Alizadeh-risani et al., 2024) (Iran)	To compare the effectiveness of the SBAR method and the modified handover model on the quality of handover and the perception of nurses in the emergency room.	Quasi-experiment with pre-post test design.	The SBAR method significantly improved the quality of handover and positive perception of nurses compared to the modified model. SBAR is considered more systematic, clear, and improves understanding of the patient's situation in the emergency department.
(Wang et al., 2024) (China)	To evaluate the effect of combining empathy nursing with the SBAR communication system on negative emotions and nursing quality in children with tracheostomy.	Experimental with the control group.	Combination interventions significantly reduced negative emotions (such as anxiety and depression) and improved the quality of nursing services and clinical communication.
(Abbaszade et al., 2021) (Iran)	To evaluate the impact of using SPAR-based handover techniques on the quality of nursing care in hospitals.	Quasi-experimental design with pre- and post-test.	The implementation of SBAR significantly improves the quality of communication between nurses and improves the overall quality of nursing services
(Lo et al., 2021) (Canada)	To assess whether the implementation of SBAR can be carried out with a high level of fidelity and whether it is effective in improving communication between health workers.	Systematic review	SBAR can be implemented with varying fidelity, and some studies have shown improved communication and patient safety. However, evidence on direct effects on patient outcomes is still limited, and consistency in the use of SBAR is often a challenge.
(Yun et al., 2023) (South Korea)	To compile and synthesize evidence on the effectiveness of SPAR-based simulation programs for nursing students, with a focus on communication, critical thinking, and self-confidence.	Systematic review	Of the 12 studies, 6 showed significant improvements in communication clarity through SBAR simulations. Other results vary. Communication clarity is considered the most consistent, so further research is recommended to evaluate various other learning outcomes.

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(Author, Year) (Country)	Purpose	Method	Results
(McCarthy et al., 2025) (United States)	To review the evidence over the past decade on the effectiveness of structured handoff protocols (such as SBAR and I-PASS) on transitions within hospital units, and their impact on patient clinical outcomes (medical errors, adverse events, mortality, duration of care).	Systematic review	The IPASS tool shows moderate evidence of improving patient clinical outcomes. - The SBAR tool is only supported by low evidence regarding improved patient clinical outcomes. - Studies are mainly conducted in academic hospitals; the absence of multisite data for tools other than IPASS. - Effective implementation depends on training and organizational support.
(Tůmová et al., 2023) (Czech Republic)	To analyze the use of SBAR in transferring patient information during the interpretation/language process, especially for foreign patients based on professional literature.	Review study (secondary analysis)	The standard SBAR format is effective for transferring information during language interpretation. Provided that healthcare workers are properly trained, SBAR improves patient safety and quality of care.

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DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic review affirm that the SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) communication framework significantly contributes to enhancing patient safety across diverse healthcare settings. By promoting structured, concise, and clear information exchange among healthcare professionals, SBAR reduces the risk of miscommunication, accelerates clinical decision-making, and strengthens interprofessional collaboration. These elements are essential in fostering a culture of safety and improving the overall quality of healthcare services.

The reviewed literature consistently highlights the positive impact of SBAR implementation on safety outcomes and communication effectiveness. For instance, there was substantial improvements in safety attitudes and team responsibility within obstetric settings following SBAR training interventions (Ting, Peng, Lin, & Hsiao, 2017). Furthermore, the method enhanced nurse–patient communication, promoting patient satisfaction, and supporting patient-centered care (Siokal, Amiruddin, Abdullah, Thamrin, Palutturi, Ibrahim, & Mallongi, 2023).

Unstructured communication during critical transitions such as handovers can jeopardize patient safety (Haig, Sutton, & Whittington, 2006; Müller, Jürgens, Redaelli, Klingberg, Hautz, & Stock, 2018; Hilda, Setiadi, Wahyuni, Supriadi, Lorian, Rasmun, & Nurachmah, 2018). SBAR, when systematically applied, establishes a standardized framework that minimizes communication breakdowns, fosters team clarity, and strengthens accountability. Similarly, SBAR training is indispensable for cultivating a safety-oriented culture among nursing staff, particularly in regions where incident reporting and inter-unit collaboration remain suboptimal (Ammouri, Tailakh, Muliira, Geethakrishnan, & Al Kindi, 2015).

In the legal and policy context, it is important to integrate structured communication tools like SBAR within national patient safety regulations. These guidelines call for standardized practices to mitigate adverse events and improve continuity of care (Ulumiyah, 2018).

SBAR also proves effective in addressing communication challenges within specialized settings. For example in intensive care units, where non-verbal patients are common, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) strategies, when

combined with SBAR, enhance nurses' ability to interpret patient needs accurately and maintain therapeutic relationships, (Al-Yahyai, Arulappan, Matua, Al-Ghafri, Al-Sarakhi, Al-Rahbi, & Jayapal, 2021). In psychiatric and emergency units—characterized by high workload and communication complexity—SBAR reduces ambiguity and supports team coordination during high-risk scenarios (Rudberg, Olsson, Thunborg, & Salzmänn-Erikson, 2023; Alizadeh-Risani, Mohammadkhah, Pourhabib, Fotokian, & Khatooni, 2024).

Several studies have also documented the benefits of integrating SBAR into digital systems. The use of a digital SBAR application improved the completeness and accuracy of handover documentation, making the process more efficient and user-friendly for nursing staff (Siauta, Imansari, & Lilipaly, 2024). Digital communication strategies, including SBAR-based formats, were vital during the COVID-19 crisis for disseminating consistent and actionable information (Strong, Drummond, Hanson, Pole, Engstrom, Copeland, & Sullivan, 2021).

The role of SBAR in enhancing interprofessional collaboration was explored in studies which highlighted the method's capacity to improve cross-disciplinary understanding, especially when combined with interprofessional education (IPE) (Stewart, 2016; Brock, Abu-Rish, Chiu, Hammer, Wilson, Vorvick, & Zierler, 2013). This is critical in multidisciplinary teams managing complex cases, such as elderly care transitions (Cam, Wennlöf, Gillespie, Franzon, Nielsen, Ling, & Källemark Sporrang, 2023, and oncology (Yu et al., 2025).

Simulation-based training using SBAR has also shown promise as an educational intervention. Students who participated in SBAR-based simulations developed greater confidence, clarity in communication, and clinical preparedness (Yun, Lee, Kang, & Park, 2023). This pedagogical strategy supports long-term improvements in professional practice and patient safety.

Despite its documented efficacy, several studies revealed gaps in SBAR application—particularly in the 'Assessment' and 'Recommendation' components—indicating a need for sustained training, supportive policies, and periodic evaluations to ensure complete and consistent utilization (Pakpahan, Saragih, Saragih, & Duha, 2025; Mohamed, Yousif, & Ahmed, 2024).

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Notably, SBAR has also been adapted successfully in multicultural and multilingual contexts. Interpreters working in multilingual healthcare settings benefited from SBAR's structured approach, which enhanced the clarity and accuracy of interpreted medical information, reducing risks associated with cross-linguistic miscommunication (Túmová, & Bártlová, 2023).

Taken together, the collective evidence supports the widespread integration of SBAR into clinical protocols, operational standards, and training programs. The method has consistently demonstrated effectiveness in improving communication clarity, teamwork, decision-making, and ultimately, patient safety. To maximize its potential, healthcare organizations must invest in routine SBAR training, leverage technological advancements for digital implementation, and foster organizational cultures that prioritize structured communication.

CONCLUSION

The SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation) communication method serves as an effective tool for delivering timely, accurate, complete, and clear information within healthcare settings. It enables healthcare professionals to communicate in a structured and systematic way, particularly during patient handovers. By promoting organized information exchange, SBAR helps reduce the likelihood of errors and enhances patient safety. Moreover, its implementation fosters interprofessional collaboration and facilitates quicker and more accurate clinical decision-making.

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