



## EVALUATE CLINICAL JUDGEMENT AMONG NURSES IN PUBLIC HOSPITAL, MALAYSIA USING SBARE TOOL: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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### Abstract

This study highlights the importance of effective communication in healthcare, particularly during patient transitions among healthcare professionals. To address communication inefficiencies during these transitions, the structured communication tool SBARe (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation, and Evaluation) is introduced among nurses in public hospitals. The methodology involves a narrative approach using in-depth interviews (IDI) and thematic analysis to analyze data. The study's findings identify three main themes: positive perceptions of the SBARe format in patient transition reports, with sub-themes on clarity and simplicity of the format; the applicability of SBARe in daily routines with improved document reporting quality and the evaluation element; and the positive impact of SBARe on communication, knowledge, and willingness to apply it in patient care practices, with sub-themes of enhanced effective communication, increased knowledge, and readiness for SBARe implementation. In conclusion, the use of SBARe yields positive participant views on its effectiveness and utility in daily healthcare practices, emphasizing the crucial role of effective communication in healthcare and suggesting potential for broader implementation in the healthcare domain as a whole.

**Keywords:** Effective communication; SBARe; Clinical Judgement; Nurses

## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication plays a crucial role in various aspects of healthcare, particularly during patient handoffs where vital patient information is exchanged among healthcare professionals. Communication breakdown during these transitions can lead to fragmented care and compromised patient safety. To address this challenge, the SBARe communication tool (Situation, Background, Assessment, Recommendation and evaluation) was introduced as a structured approach to enhance communication among nurses in public hospitals.

Research on the SBARe tool is still in its early stages, and there is a lack of studies assessing its effectiveness in Malaysia and globally. However, it has been adopted by nurses in several public hospitals, including Sultanah Nur Zahirah Hospital (Terengganu), Serdang Hospital (Selangor), Tengku Ampuan Afzan Hospital (Pahang), Kuala Lumpur Hospital and others.

During the initial implementation, ward managers encountered difficulties in adapting to the SBARe format. However, with consistent training and ongoing monitoring, they found that the 24-hour reports became more organized and systematic. A clear comparison between the old report format and the use of the SBARe tool highlighted significant improvements. Ward managers reported an enhanced ability to prioritize tasks and a reduction in report preparation time. Satisfaction with the SBARe

tool was evident as ward managers provided positive assessments. Effective communication during handoffs also contributed to improved team relationships, ensuring that only relevant and structured information was discussed (Randmaa et al., 2014).

This study aims to explore clinical judgement towards the impact of the SBARe tool on communication and clinical decision-making among Malaysian nurses. The objective of this research is to evaluate clinical judgment among nurses in Malaysian public hospitals using the SBARe tool. Through this approach, it is anticipated that nurses' clinical assessments will become more comprehensive, contributing to improved communication and patient safety. This study serves as an initial step towards a deeper understanding of the utilization of the SBARe tool within the healthcare context in Malaysia. The study aims to explore nurses' perspectives or comments on using SBARe during the handover process, assess the practicality of using SBARe in their daily routines, and recognize the level of communication, knowledge, and readiness among nurses in utilizing SBARe as a communication tool during nursing handover (Qualitative). This study will provide further insights into how the use of the SBARe communication tool with an evaluation component can impact clinical judgment outcomes in healthcare. This aligns with the global aspiration to advance the field of healthcare and enhance patient safety and care quality.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the context of healthcare, communication goes beyond its role as a mere tool for conveying information; it also encompasses the expression of emotions and the establishment of strong relationships (Smallwood, 2011). Instances where communication is disrupted within the medical field have been acknowledged as a primary factor contributing to unintended patient harm (Committee on Patient Safety and Quality Improvement, 2012; Müller et al., 2018; The Joint Commission, 2023). Effective communication plays a vital role in medical training, especially during the handover process, ensuring the continuity of appropriate care and patient safety. According to a collective assessment by the Joint Commission on root cause analysis, communication issues accounted for nearly 70% of adverse patient safety events in accredited healthcare organizations (Müller et al., 2018; The Joint Commission, 2023).

One of the communication tools introduced to enhance communication in the healthcare process is SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment, and Recommendation). For instance, a systematic review of 11 articles published on SBAR in databases like PUBMED, EMBASE, CINAHL, Cochrane Library, and PsycINFO in January 2017 indicated that, overall, many authors suggest that SBAR improves patient safety. There is some evidence of the effectiveness of SBAR implementation on patient outcomes (Müller et

al., 2018). Additionally, according to findings from a study conducted by Randmaa et al., (2014), the use of SBAR, which integrated the SBAR communication tool in anesthetic clinics, was associated with an increase in staff perceptions of interprofessional communication and safety climate, along with a reduction in the number of incident reports involving communication failures.

However, there are limitations to the use of SBAR in the context of nursing communication, particularly during the handover process. Therefore, this research focuses on the development of the SBARe communication tool, incorporating an evaluation component. This evaluation aims to assess the expected outcomes of nursing interventions and stimulate critical thinking during the assessment process (Wanzer, 2021). The evaluation component is essential as it analyzes anticipated outcomes to determine whether they have been achieved within the designated timeframe. Nurses employ critical thinking to assess whether expected patient outcomes have been fully, partially, or not achieved within the specified timeframe during the assessment process (Riegel et al., 2018; Wanzer, 2021). If results are not achieved within the given timeframe, the care plan must be updated (Clarke et al., 2019; Goode, 1995). The evaluation element has also been incorporated as the sixth step in the nursing process (and the sixth Standard of Practice set by the American Nurses Association). This standard is defined as "The registered nurse evaluates progress toward goal attainment and

outcome achievement." The patient's condition and the effectiveness of nursing care must be thoroughly evaluated, and the care plan must be modified as necessary (Riegel et al., 2018).

However, research on the effectiveness of the SBARe tool remains limited in Malaysia. There was a study at Hospital Kuala Lumpur that examined nurses' perceptions of handover between shifts but did not utilize SBARe (Woei Quan Chong et al., 2020). Therefore, the researchers propose employing the SBARe tool to assess clinical judgment among nurses at a hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The methodology employed in this study is a Narrative approach using In-Depth Interviews (IDI) and Thematic Analysis to analyze the data. This method was chosen due to its capability to uncover significant themes from qualitative interview data. The study focuses on nurse leaders (sister) who utilize the SBARe format during the handover of 24-hour patient reports. This selection is crucial as it aims to explore the impact of effective communication within the critical context of healthcare. Participants for the study will be selected from the pool of nurse leaders (sisters) serving in public hospital, in accordance with the predetermined criteria. The research will be conducted at one of the public hospitals in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, considering its relevance and the availability of participants. The study is scheduled to take place from February 1 to July 30, 2023, with the primary data collection period being from June 1 to June

30, 2023. A purposive sampling technique will be used to ensure the selection of suitable participants who can provide valuable insights. To ensure data quality, validity, and facilitate in-depth analysis, the study will involve a total of 15 participants. This sample size determination follows best practices in qualitative research, aiming to achieve data saturation and comprehensive exploration of themes (Saunders et al., 2018). Participants will have the right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time without facing negative consequences, ensuring their participation is entirely voluntary and safeguards their well-being. Ethical considerations involve obtaining approvals from relevant authorities such as Medical Research and Ethics Committee (MREC), (ID-23-00583-GGB), ensuring participant confidentiality, and obtaining clear and informed consent from all participants. Data will be collected through face-to-face In-Depth Interview (IDI) sessions, utilizing open-ended questions to allow researchers to gain comprehensive insights from participants. The obtained data will be analyzed using Thematic Analysis, which entails meticulous reading and analysis of each line in the interview transcripts. This process includes coding thematic categories and identifying emerging themes from the data. Discussions and consensus among researchers will be conducted to ensure consistency and agreement in identifying themes.

**Table 1: Coding of the study**

Code	Explanation
P1	Participant 1
P2	Participant 2
P3	Participant 3
P4	Participant 4
P5	Participant 5
P6	Participant 6
P7	Participant 7
P8	Participant 8
P9	Participant 9
P10	Participant 10
P11	Participant 11
P12	Participant 12
P13	Participant 13
P14	Participant 14
P15	Participant 15

## **FINDINGS**

### **Socio-demographic of participants**

A total of 15 participants were involved in this study. The participants were nurse leaders with ages ranging from 38 to 50 years. They had work experience ranging from 17 to 27 years and had diverse educational backgrounds and

specializations, including Gerontology, Renal, Midwifery and Infection Control, HIV counselling, Neurology, Peri-operative, Orthopaedic, Intensive care and Renal, Cardiology, and Emergency Trauma. The participants held positions in various departments within the hospital, providing a broad perspective for this study.

**Table 2: Socio-demographic of the participants**

No	Gender	Age (years)	Education	Specialization	Experiences (years)	Department
P1	Female	46	Diploma	Nil	20	Medical
P2	Male	39	Post-basic	Gerontology	17	Gerontology
P3	Male	38	Post-basic	Renal	17	Nephrology
P4	Female	50	Degree	Midwife and Infection Control	27	OSH
P5	Female	40	Degree	HIV counselling	18	Medical
P6	Female	39	Post-basic	Neurology	19	Neurology
P7	Female	40	Post-basic	Peri-operative	20	Surgical
P8	Male	42	Post-basic	Medical	20	Medical
P9	Female	46	Post-basic	Orthopaedic	26	Orthopaedic
P10	Female	47	Post-basic	Intensive care and Renal	22	ICU
P11	Female	39	Post-basic	Cardiology	17	Cardiology
P12	Female	41	Post-basic	Medical	17	Medical
P13	Female	40	Post-basic	Nephrology	18	Nephrology
P14	Female	47	Post-basic	Cardiology and Emergency Trauma	23	Emergency
P15	Female	43	Post-basic	Medical	20	Medical

**THEMES AND SUBTHEMES**

Table 3 encompasses three main themes regarding the utilization of SBARe for passing over reports. The first theme highlights the favorable perceptions of SBARe due to its succinct, accurate, and compact reporting attributes (SAR). The second theme revolves around the applicability of SBARe in the daily

healthcare routine through the enhancement of documentation reporting and user- friendliness in a caregiving context. The third theme emphasizes the importance of improved communication, expanded knowledge, and the caregivers' willingness to implement SBARe as a transformative shift in information delivery and healthcare practices.

**Table 3: Themess and subthemes**

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Positive Perceptions of SBARe for Passing Over Report	-Simple, Accurate and Compact (SAR)
2. Applicability of SBARe in Daily Nursing Routine	-Enhanced documentation reporting
3. Communication, Knowledge, and Readiness	-Improved Communication and knowledge -Willingness to Implement

## DISCUSSIONS

### Themes 1: Positive Perceptions of SBARe for Passing Over Report

Studies have shown that the utilization of the SBAR format can have a positive impact on communication and the overall safety climate. This, in turn, can contribute significantly to enhancing the exchange of patient information and ultimately lead to improved patient outcomes (Ghonem & El-Husany, 2023; Müller et al., 2018; Randmaa et al., 2014). Similarly, when considering the components of the SBARe, researchers have identified theme that underscore the optimistic viewpoints expressed by participants regarding the effectiveness of the SBARe format within the context of creating transition reports. Participants hold favorable opinions regarding this format, noting its advantageous qualities that contribute to the successful communication of transition report information.

#### Simple, Accurate and Compact (SAR)

Participants particularly commend various positive facets of the SBARe format, which collectively assist in the efficient and effective conveyance of information in transition reports. Notably, participants appreciate the format's brevity, which allows them to present information concisely. The format's clarity is also highlighted, with participants emphasizing its ability to precisely capture essential details. Moreover, participants perceive the SBARe format as possessing a structured and organized approach, further amplifying its efficacy in conveying information during handover processes.

In conclusion, participants acknowledge and value the favorable attributes inherent to the SBARe format, as it greatly facilitates the efficient and effective communication of transition report information.

"Regarding the SBARe format for writing the 24-hour report, the opinion is concise and compact." (P1)

"The SBARe format for the night report is more succinct, easily comprehensible, and encompasses the patient's situation." (P3) "The SBARe format is very concise, precise, compact, and facilitates passing over the report." (P5)

#### Figure 1: Quotation from participants (Source: Study sampling)

The utilization of the SBARe format has sparked favorable discussions regarding its application in composing transition reports. Study participants have conveyed positive viewpoints regarding the advantageous

attributes of simplicity, accuracy, and compactness embedded within this format. These strengths have been duly recognized by participants as vital elements for conveying information efficiently and effectively. The

significance of information clarity emerges as a pivotal aspect emphasized by participants. Through the utilization of the SBARe format, conveyed information becomes easily comprehensible to report recipients. This perception that nursing documentation might be perceived as laborious, repetitive, and monotonous (De Groot et al., 2022). This perception could potentially lead to frustration among nurses and the possibility of errors in data documentation (Bjerkan et al., 2021; De Groot et al., 2022). The succinct nature of the SBARe format also emerges as a salient point. Participants hold the belief that succinctly conveying information conserves time and directs focus towards core details. In rapidly evolving transition scenarios, the ability to succinctly yet comprehensively present information is highly esteemed. Precision in information delivery also emerges as a prominent factor. The SBARe format incentivizes report writers to condense information to its most relevant and essential components. This not only enhances communication efficiency but also ensures that the conveyed information truly holds requisite substance.

Another advantage of the SBARe format is its ease of comprehension. Through its concise and straightforward presentation, recipients of the report can promptly grasp a patient's condition without having to navigate through protracted and intricate text. This greatly facilitates effective information conveyance, particularly in situations necessitating prompt actions. In summation, this theme underscores

proves crucial in averting confusion or misunderstandings in communication, which could potentially jeopardize patients' well-being.

participants' affirmative perspectives on the easily understandable, precise, and concise attributes of the SBARe format in the context of formulating transition reports. These characteristics yield substantial value in the endeavor to efficiently and effectively communicate information, thereby underscoring the pivotal significance of lucid and accurate communication within the healthcare domain.

## **Themes 2: Applicability of SBARe in Daily Nursing Routine**

This theme portrays the in-depth perspectives provided by study participants regarding the significance and effectiveness of the SBARe format in their daily nursing care routines. Participants explicitly state how the utilization of the SBARe format significantly contributes to enhancing documentation processes and overall quality of patient care.

Within the context of nursing documentation, Momenipour & Pennathur, (2019) emphasizes the importance of identifying the most effective medium for documentation processes. This understanding is reinforced by the recognition that inefficient and repetitive documentation not only consumes valuable time that should be dedicated to direct patient care or essential tasks (De Groot et al., 2022; Woei Quan Chong et al., 2020), but also has the potential to undermine

healthcare service quality and compromise patient outcomes (Woei Quan Chong et al., 2020). Study participants regard the SBARe format not only as a valuable tool but also as highly effective in ensuring the delivery of precise, detailed, and pertinent information within the realm of daily care provision. This viewpoint is supported by participants' experiences, highlighting how the SBARe format enables them to focus on critical details and patient needs without neglecting safety and efficiency considerations. With an emphasis on structured communication, the SBARe format aids nurses in executing their daily responsibilities more efficiently.

Overall, this theme underscores the participants' recognition of the SBARe format as an empowering tool that enhances their daily care routines, with an emphasis on improved documentation, clearer information dissemination, and heightened patient safety.

### **Subtheme 1: Enhanced documentation reporting**

Within this subtheme, study participants provide specific insights into the positive impacts resulting from the adoption of the SBARe format in the documentation reporting process within their daily nursing routine. Participants highlight that the SBARe format has contributed to an enhancement in their method of recording patient information. With its organized structure, specifically the SBARe format, nurses find it more efficient to capture and systematically document crucial patient

details. This systematic approach is vital for ensuring comprehensive and detailed reports.

Of significant note, participants emphasize the introduction of an additional evaluation element within the SBARe format. This element enables a comprehensive assessment of patients' adherence to doctors' instructions. Evaluation, in this context, refers to the process of systematically assessing the effectiveness, value, or quality of a specific program, intervention, or service (Process, 2023). In nursing, evaluation is a pivotal component of the nursing process, involving the continuous and systematic collection of data to gauge the patient's response to care and the effectiveness of nursing interventions (Wanzer, 2021). This aids nurses in closely monitoring patients' progress and making necessary adjustments.

These findings are consistent with earlier research (Lo et al., 2021; Müller et al., 2018; Woei Quan Chong et al., 2020), asserting that the SBAR format enhances documentation quality by allowing nurses to prioritize essential patient details. Similarly, participants conclude that the structured and comprehensive approach facilitated by the SBARe format also improves communication, leading to more detailed and informative reports.

In conclusion, this subtheme underscores the improvements observed in documentation reporting among nurses through the utilization of the SBARe format, particularly with the incorporation of an additional evaluation element and a structured approach within the format.

"Through the element evaluation, we can determine whether the patient is consuming the prescribed amount of water as directed by the doctor or not." (P1)

"With the addition of element evaluation, someone, I mean after my shift, the person on duty after me can re-assess it." (P4)

"Using SBARe has significantly improved our documentation, allowing us to focus on key patient details and ensure comprehensive reports."(P9)

**Figure 2: Quotation from participants (Source: Study sampling)**

### **Themes 3: Communication, Knowledge, and Readiness**

This theme elucidates how the implementation of the SBARe format influences communication dynamics, enhances nursing knowledge, and fosters preparedness among healthcare professionals. Study participants acknowledge that the structured format facilitates effective exchange of patient information, reducing the risks of misinterpretation and errors. Heightened communication serves as a foundation for seamless care transitions (De Groot et al., 2022; Ghonem & El-Husany, 2023; Müller et al., 2018).

Furthermore, participants recognize that utilizing the SBARe format necessitates a profound understanding of patients' conditions and treatment plans. This underscores the significance of nursing knowledge in accurately recording and conveying patient information. The concise yet comprehensive format criteria encourage nurses to fully comprehend each patient case, ultimately contributing to their knowledge enrichment (Ghonem & El-Husany, 2023).

The theme also unveils how the utilization of the SBARe format cultivates preparedness among nurses. By structuring reports based on essential components, the format stimulates nurses to be equipped with critical patient information. This proactive approach encourages preparedness and ensures vital information is readily available, empowering healthcare professionals to respond promptly to evolving patient needs

In summary, the "Communication, Knowledge, and Readiness" theme expounds on the interplay between effective communication, nursing knowledge, and preparedness within the context of SBARe format utilization. The format's impact on communication dynamics, knowledge enhancement, and preparedness underscores its importance in fostering a holistic and efficient approach to patient care transitions.

#### **Subthemes 1: Improved Communication and knowledge**

In this subtheme, the focus is directed towards the enhancement of communication dynamics and the development of nursing knowledge

facilitated by the implementation of the SBARe format. The utilization of the SBARe format has brought about significant changes in communication among nurses. This format encourages a clear and structured approach to information sharing, thereby facilitating the efficient exchange of crucial patient-related details. The clear and structured communication style promoted by SBARe helps eliminate ambiguity and uncertainty, enabling seamless communication among healthcare professionals. This ensures the accurate transmission of vital details, reducing the likelihood of misunderstandings or misinterpretations. As a result, the overall in the reports, enabling them to gain a comprehensive understanding of the patients' medical situations. This heightened clarity assists nurses in making well-informed decisions regarding patient care interventions. The concise yet comprehensive structure of the SBARe format aids nurses in swiftly identifying essential patient details, thereby empowering them to provide timely and appropriate care. As a result, the collective knowledge of the nursing team is enriched, fostering a more knowledgeable and competent approach to patient care (Figure 3).

quality of communication within the nursing team is elevated, contributing to more effective patient care coordination (Figure 3). Enhancing communication among healthcare providers holds importance in optimizing patient care (Müller et al., 2018). Effective communication in healthcare can yield positive outcomes, including (Lo et al., 2021; Randmaa et al., 2014).

Furthermore, the implementation of the SBARe format has contributed to the advancement of nursing knowledge regarding patients' conditions. Nurses find it easier to interpret information presented

In summary, this subtheme underscores the positive impact of the SBARe format on enhancing communication dynamics and nurturing nursing knowledge. The format's emphasis on clear and structured communication contributes to effective information exchange, while its role in improving nursing knowledge aids in informed decision-making and competent patient care.

"SBARe promotes better communication among nurses. It encourages clear and structured reporting, ensuring that important patient information is shared efficiently."(P6)

"With SBARe, our knowledge about patients' conditions has improved. We can easily interpret reports and make informed decisions for patient care."(P11)

**Figure 3: Quotation from participants**

## Subthemes 2: Willingness to Implement

In this subtheme, the focus is on the participants' willingness to implement the SBARe format in their daily routines. They enthusiastically embrace and are ready to integrate the SBARe format into their nursing practices. This eagerness stems from their belief in the benefits that this format offers. They perceive that SBARe can streamline the reporting process and promote consistent documentation. The positive impact of SBARe on communication and documentation has ignited a sense of enthusiasm within them to incorporate it into their nursing practices.

The SBARe format serves as a valuable communication tool in the field of nursing, facilitating clear and effective communication among healthcare providers. Through its use, healthcare providers can efficiently convey crucial patient information, ensuring that all relevant details are shared and comprehended. This aids in reducing the risk of errors and enhancing patient safety. Effective and clear communication among healthcare professionals is pivotal in conveying essential patient information accurately, thereby reducing the chances of errors, misunderstandings, and potential harm to patients (Chichirez CM & VL,

2018). In the nursing realm, effective communication is particularly crucial in enhancing patient outcomes and overall patient care (Geok et al., 2021). Effective communication among healthcare providers encourages productive collaboration and supports continuity and clarity within the patient care team (Lo et al., 2021; Müller et al., 2018).

The participants' willingness to take this initiative reflects their confidence in the potential of the SBARe format to enhance efficiency and the quality of care. It also underscores their appreciation for the significance of accurate communication and documentation in delivering optimal healthcare to patients. This willingness holds the promise of broader implementation and success of the SBARe format in the broader context of healthcare.

In conclusion, this subtheme underscores participants' readiness to adopt the SBARe format, driven by their belief in its benefits. It emphasizes the pivotal role of effective communication and documentation in enhancing patient care and outcomes, promising a wider adoption of the SBARe format within the broader realm of healthcare.

"I'm willing to adopt SBARe into my daily routine. It streamlines reporting and encourages consistent documentation, which benefits both nurses and patients."(P12)

"The positive impact of SBARe on communication and documentation makes me enthusiastic about implementing it in my nursing practice."(P15)

**Figure 4: Quotation from participants**

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the positive reception and practical utility of the SBARe format in the daily healthcare routine of nurses. The findings affirm the crucial role of effective communication in healthcare, particularly during patient transitions, and highlight the potential of the SBARe tool in streamlining reporting and enhancing documentation. Emerging themes, including the positive views towards SBARe, its integration into daily healthcare practices, and its influence on communication, knowledge, and readiness, collectively emphasize the significant impact of structured communication in advancing patient care. However, this study has limitations, including its focus on specific hospitals and a small sample size. Future research could expand to include a broader participant pool and diverse care contexts. Notably, this study was self-funded by the researchers.

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