

## A Vision of Teamwork in Healthcare

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Research has shown that teamwork has a direct effect on patient safety and treatment outcomes [To Err is Human: Building a Safer Health Care System,

1999]. A *team* is defined as a collection of people, built primarily on the technical capabilities of its members, working in pursuit of a common mission or goal. Healthcare teams that work well together and share a common vision make fewer mistakes.

### Shared Behavior

One way to promote teamwork is to exhibit it yourself. When co-workers see your willingness to collaborate with others in a positive way, they will be more likely to contribute their best work.

### Shared Leadership

Effective teams share leadership attributes among all the team members, rather than relying on one person to lead all team efforts. For example, a medical assistant may take the initiative to obtain the blood pressure of a patient while a respiratory therapist may take the initiative in helping a patient who is having trouble breathing. Shared leadership in patient care means that everyone works together to plan their daily patient load and to review results and solve problems. It also means that administrative and clinical staff coordinate work and accept responsibility for outcomes without placing blame.

### Shared Backup

Effective health care teams monitor their work, making sure that all tasks

are completed according to plan. They anticipate the needs of other team members and step in to help one another when needed. In addition, they coach one another and cross train each other to share knowledge and skill.

### Shared Mental Model

A shared mental model is another key component of teamwork and is demonstrated when all staff are on the same page. This means, the team is sharing a set of closely held values and goals that define how each member interacts to complete work. It is demonstrated by anticipating the needs of patient and clinic team members, and by adjusting strategies as work situations change. Essentially, employees are all sharing the same understanding regarding the work that needs to be accomplished by the team.

Mutual trust is an important aspect of the shared mental model. When trust has been established on a team, each team member knows from experience that other team members will perform their tasks, share information, admit mistakes and accept constructive coaching. Building rapport, by making a real connection with coworkers, is a great way to build trust.

### Four Steps that Promote Teamwork

**Step 1:** Communicate with all team members that may be involved with the patient's care or treatment.

**Step 2:** Ask co-workers for help when you come across a problem you can't solve. Most likely, someone will offer a solution that you didn't consider. This type of action also encourages team members to go to you or someone else on the UCLA Health System team when

they have a problem instead of just struggling with it on their own.

**Step 3:** Never immediately shut down another staff member's idea. This can hurt a person's chances of ever speaking up again. It can also deter other members of the team from contributing suggested solutions to a problem. Be open to ideas of others, actively listen to opinions, and then consider which ideas are optimal.

**Step 4:** Be accountable for your actions and never blame another team member for a mistake that you made.

Effective healthcare teams believe in each other and have the desire to help one another. Healthcare teams must exhibit a sense of collective efficacy and dedication to patient safety.

At UCLA Health System, we rely on each other to succeed with providing the best patient care to heal humankind, one patient at a time.

*It begins with U.* ▶

# How To Sustain Teamwork—Lessons from Geese



Teamwork is essential in any workplace and is especially important in healthcare. Knowing how to foster and sustain good teamwork can help us give the best patient care and create a positive work culture. We can look to nature for a lesson on how relying on others promotes the goals of a team and contributes to maintaining a team environment.

## Teamwork and Geese

### Fact 1:

As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an "uplift" for the birds that follow. By flying in a "V" formation the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

#### The Lesson:

*People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of each other.*

### Fact 2:

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the birds immediately in front of it.

#### The Lesson:

*If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go; we are willing to accept their help and give our help to others.*

### Fact 3:

When the lead bird tires, it rotates back into the formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

#### The Lesson:

*It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership attributes. As with geese, people are interdependent on each others' skills, capabilities, and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, or resources.*

### Fact 4:

The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

#### The Lesson

*We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In teams where there is encouragement, the production is much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values and to encourage the heart and core values of others) is the quality of honking we seek.*

### Fact 5:

When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

#### The Lesson:

*If we have as much sense of geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we're strong.*

## Inspirational Quotes of Teamwork

"The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I.' And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say 'I.' They don't think 'I.' They think 'we'; they think 'team.' They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but 'we' gets the credit.... This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done."

—Peter Drucker

"Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

—Andrew Carnegie

"Talent wins games, but teamwork and intelligence wins championships."

—Michael Jordan

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed. It is the only thing that ever has."

—Margaret Mead

"You will find men who want to be carried on the shoulders of others, who think that the world owes them a living. They don't seem to see that we must all lift together and pull together."

—Henry Ford

"It is amazing how much you can accomplish when it doesn't matter who gets the credit."

—Unknown

"None of us is as smart as all of us."

—Ken Blanchard

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

—Helen Keller