

## Interview with Joy Goldsmith and Elaine Wittenberg

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT – September 7, 2023]

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*Lisa Bonsall:* Hi, it's Lisa Bonsall, Senior Clinical Editor for Lippincott NursingCenter. I'm here at the Lippincott Nursing Education Innovation Summit, and right now I have the pleasure of speaking with Joy Goldsmith and Elaine Wittenberg, and we're going to talk about assessment and evaluation of communication concepts. Thank you so much for talking with me.

*Joy Goldsmith:* Thank you for having us.

*Lisa Bonsall:* Why is it important that the American Association of Colleges of Nursing identified communication as a core nursing value?

*Joy Goldsmith:* So we have come to understand through our own research that communication, even as a practice, as a theoretical concept, really has not been purposefully integrated into nurse education curricula across the country by looking at descriptions of syllabi, by getting feedback from course coordinators and deans. There's really not a purposive stepwise integration of communication into nurse education content.

And so there are sort of two avenues of difficulty in that reality. One is that students are not getting rigorous social science based content that offers some guidance and some answers to them and some tools for their practice. But the other part is nurse faculty do not have resources and a structured pathway to teach communication. So you end up with kind of an anecdotal approach to communication or a surface engagement with communication.

So nurses deserve and need specialized nurse specific communication research and content that's evidence based and theory driven. And so that's what this rollout of the new essentials will support is that shift.

*Elaine Wittenberg:* For a long time, communication's been known as a soft science and this is a huge turning point in creating and establishing communication as a legitimate social science area of study and a legitimate area for training.

*Lisa Bonsall:* Thank you. What are three types of learning objectives for nurse communication?

*Elaine Wittenberg:* Well, when we think about nurse communication, it really is about skill training. And skill training is essentially behavior change. And when you want somebody to change their behavior and do something differently than what they're normally doing or what they think is the best approach, there are several different factors that come into play with that. So that ties to the learning objectives in terms of providing communication education and instruction.

So the first is that nursing students need the communication knowledge, knowledge about communication and that social science approach, the theories, the frameworks and the concepts. When somebody has the knowledge of something new, then they have to have the right attitude. And so you have to teach different curriculum content that is going to impress upon the students the right communication attitudes and having a positive attitude and valuing communication skills.

And when somebody has the knowledge and has a positive attitude, they're more willing to engage in behavior change. And that's where the skill comes in. And in the communication skills. It's about employing evidence based practices that have shown to be effective with patients and families, and also are comfortable for nurses. So it's communication knowledge, communication attitude and communication skill.

All three of those are necessary.

*Lisa Bonsall:* How can those learning objectives link back to competency domains?

*Elaine Wittenberg:* Well, the whole point of the AACN Essentials is to establish competency based education, which essentially the goal of that is to show growth in the skill or to show growth in the competency so similar to the learning objectives I've just described, it would be a progressive building of communication skills that stems from knowledge, attitude into skill. So we identify entry level skills as being building that knowledge base and understanding and then building off of the knowledge base into the positive attitudes.

And then the skills would come after that base has already been established. So you would need to provide competency assessment for knowledge, attitude and then skill. And currently there isn't a road map, if you will, for how to do this. So in most current programs, they're just trying to teach skill and it's a big bucket list of 20 skills.

And then students get nervous. They're not going to remember all 20 skills. And then faculty are trying to assess for all 20 and we don't feel like that is a good approach. In fact, that's the strength of the AACN Essentials by identifying communication as a concept, then we're able to say, Here's how you build into a skill.

*Joy Goldsmith:* So for example, I think it's domain nine that is population health and there are lots of sub domains under that larger heading. But communication as a concept, weaves readily across those sub domains. When you're thinking about things like cultural difference, when you're thinking about health literacy, when you're thinking about plain language, those are all...that's in our wheelhouse. And so we're interested in helping map those ideas, attitudes and skills onto the domains and supporting nurse educators in that effort.

*Elaine Wittenberg:* It's like patting your head and rubbing your belly and jumping up and down and chewing gum, yeah, because we really don't know what we're doing, but we really do. And that's where the AACN Essentials is really great. It's giving us a framework and so we can come to the table with 20 years of communication research, theory, and evidence and skills practice.

And the mapping becomes easy. And so here today and at this conference, we're going to be providing a presentation that shows an example of how to accomplish that.

*Lisa Bonsall:* Thanks so much for talking to me today.

*Joy Goldsmith & Elaine Wittenberg:* Thanks, Lisa. Thank you.

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