Suppose you have been working on a committee to develop a new policy for family visitation in the critical care units. After a trial period, the decision has been made to implement open visitation at the nurse’s discretion. You inform your nurse manager of the need to disseminate this information to the staffs of the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Coronary Care Unit (CCU). Because of budget and time constraints, the nurse manager is reluctant to have a mandatory staff meeting to address this issue, and the agenda for the next several staff members is already full. She suggests that you present the information via a poster presentation.

A poster presentation? You have many questions. Where do you start? How do you make a poster? Can you make a poster?

In these days of dwindling resources and many time constraints, many units have decided to present information to staff by poster presentations. The poster can be set up in a staff area and can relay important information. One poster could be made to rotate between units or multiple posters could be made to show in several units simultaneously.

This article presents guidelines for making an effective poster presentation. Posters have been used for years to share information. Historically, posters have been used to disseminate research findings. Many scientific meetings each year have poster sessions in which research findings are displayed by poster, and the researcher has the opportunity to interact with the participants.1

However, a poster does not have to be formal. A poster can be an informal way to share information with others. Many units now routinely use posters to disseminate information. Thus, formal or informal, the basic principles of poster presentation are the same. However, this article focuses on more informal poster presentations that can be used in your everyday work setting.

**TIPS FOR A GREAT POSTER**

1. Start with a good idea. The good idea may be a new policy or the description of a new piece of equipment. The poster should grab the reader’s attention. Many times a poster’s appearance will have an impact on the reader’s perception of the material presented.1

2. Check the guidelines. Find out exactly what your nurse manager or nurse educator wants. Will your poster be displayed on an easel or a tabletop? Or will it be posted on a bulletin board? This information will help you decide how large to make your poster. At our facility, we put information on a 3-×-4-ft poster board and display it on an easel. This is portable so that the poster can be moved from area to area quite easily.

3. Develop the content for your poster. Remember, people will read your poster so the information must be presented in a clear manner. Present enough information to explain the purpose of the poster but not enough to lose the main idea in minutiae.1 Remember, posters should show not tell.1 For example, for this poster, you may want to present the results of the pilot study, show a copy of the new policy, and list the highlights of the policy. You may also want to include a copy of the new information sheet for families informing them of the visitation policy.

4. Be sure your poster is readable from approximately 2–3 feet. Place the title on top in large letters, at least 1 inch in height. Remember, people read from left to right, so organize your poster in this fashion. It should take your reader about 5 minutes to comprehend your information.1
5. Once you know the information you want to present on your poster, design the layout. This will be based on the size of your poster. Do not be too wordy or make your poster cluttered. Just place the essential information on your poster. Keep it simple.

6. Place the content under appropriate headings such as purpose, procedure, sample policy, and results. Include on your poster the individual to contact for questions. Feel free to use graphs, photographs, tables, etc. to illustrate your points.

Your poster can be as elaborate or as simple as you desire. Some posters are created by media specialists. However, the posters we use in our work setting are usually made by using simple computer-generated print-out. If you are making your own poster using computer graphics, use heavy bond paper. Mount the paper on your poster using a mounting spray or double-sided tape. This can be a very cost-effective method to present your poster.

After your poster is made, display it on your nursing unit with pride. Your will find this is a cost-effective, easy way to disseminate information to your colleagues. Be prepared for questions and admiration of your work. You have done a good job developing your new visitation policy and now you are continuing your responsibility by sharing the information with your coworkers.

The guidelines presented in this article are geared toward developing an informal poster. Although they are similar to those for creating a formal research poster, there are some differences. A poster can be fun to make and is an easy, economical method to disseminate information to many people.

References

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