

Unpacking the Summarising Event in Trauma Emergencies: The Case of Pre-briefings

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Abstract : In order for a group of ad-hoc professional to perform as a team, a shared understanding of the problem at hand and an agreed action plan are necessary components. This is particularly significant in complex, time sensitive professional settings such as in trauma emergencies. In this context, team briefings prior to the patient arrival (pre-briefings) constitute a critical event for the performance of the team; they provide the necessary space for co-constructing a shared understanding of the situation through summarising information available to the team: yet the act of summarising is widely assumed in medical practice but not systematically researched. In the vast teamwork literature, terms such as 'shared mental model', 'mental space' and 'cognate labelling' are used extensively, and loosely, to denote the outcome of the summarising process, but how exactly this is done interactionally remains under researched. This paper reports on the forms and functions of pre-briefings in a major trauma centre in the UK. Taking an interactional approach, we draw on 30 simulated and real-life trauma emergencies (15 from each dataset) and zoom in on the use of pre-briefings, which we consider focal points in the management of trauma emergencies. We show how ad hoc teams negotiate sharedness of future orientation through summarising, synthesising information, and establishing common understanding of the situation. We illustrate the role, characteristics, and structure of pre-briefing sequences that have been evaluated as 'efficient' in our data and the impact (in)effective pre-briefings have on teamwork. Our work shows that the key roles in the event own the act of summarising and we problematise the implications for leadership in trauma emergencies. We close the paper with a model for pre-briefing and provide recommendations for clinical practice, arguing that effective pre-briefing practice is teachable.

Keywords : summarising, medical emergencies, interaction analysis, shared/mental models

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