

MINIMIZING  
LIABILITY AND  
ENHANCING  
SURGICAL OUTCOMES  
THROUGH EFFECTIVE  
COMMUNICATION



AMERICAN COLLEGE  
OF SURGEONS  
DIVISION OF EDUCATION  
**APRIL 4-7, 2008**  
CHICAGO, IL



Research has shown that the risk of liability is decreased and patient care outcomes are positively influenced by effective communication. Breakdowns in communication occur with patients and their families, other physicians, and nurses, and they occur not only with surgical procedures but also during patient care without a surgical procedure. Problems in communication contribute to adverse events, anger, and mistrust, and increases morbidity and mortality.

Surgeon reviewers of closed-claim cases have concluded that many communication problems result from a failure to spend sufficient time and use good communication skills to adequately complete commonplace tasks, as well as to address more complex and critical situations. Problem-prone patterns and mistakes in listening, and in gathering and conveying information, have been identified and can be prevented. The effect of communication on surgical patient care and safety is far reaching; yet, few opportunities exist for surgeons to refine critical high-level communication skills and ensure that the skills are being used consistently despite the demands of busy practices. This course is especially designed for surgeons interested in using effective communication to reduce the risk of liability, enhance surgical outcomes, and serve as resources in their institutions.

The purpose of the course is to help practicing surgeons refine and use effective communication skills to:

- ▣ Decrease the risk of liability and improve patient outcomes.
- ▣ Use communication skills and time management to diligently accomplish the ordinary tasks most associated with liability.
- ▣ Avoid the common mistakes that contribute to litigation when listening, gathering information, and conveying information.
- ▣ Deal with anger and mistrust and disarm aggression.
- ▣ Effectively discuss adverse outcomes and errors.
- ▣ Recognize and circumvent the common communication pitfalls with patients and families, other physicians, and nurses.
- ▣ Use strategies to increase mutual understanding and decision making.
- ▣ Learn about cultural sensitivities, gender communication, electronic communications, and telephone conversations.



# R P O S E   A N D   D E S C R I P T I O N

Practical experience in managing challenging scenarios will be provided using surgeons and trained actors. Individuals will have opportunities to be videotaped in a supportive environment and to receive one-to-one feedback and critiques from faculty members. Guidance will also be provided for surgeons who want to act as communication resources at their home institutions.

## INTENDED PARTICIPANTS

Effective communication is essential to providing high-quality patient care and to being successful in the many different roles a surgeon must assume. This course is designed for practicing surgeons who want to use the principles of effective communication to minimize their risk of liability and improve their patient outcomes. Surgeons seeking opportunities to evaluate and practice new and extant skills in a realistic yet safe environment without negative repercussions will benefit from the course and from the one-to-one constructive feedback from supportive faculty. Surgeons interested in acting as resources at their institutions will also find the course valuable. Only 30 participants will be accepted for the course.

## CORE COMPETENCIES AND MAINTENANCE OF CERTIFICATION

One of the core competencies defined by the American Board of Medical Specialties is interpersonal and communication skills. Surgeons who seek to refine their communication skills and address this core competency requirement within the context of Maintenance of Certification<sup>®</sup> will find the course especially helpful, as will those surgeons who want to act as resources for others in the area of effective communication in different surgical settings.

## ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE TO REDUCE LIABILITY AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES

Real-life experiences provide the basis and focus for this course. The role of communication in various patient care tasks that are frequently associated with liability claims and poor patient outcomes will be addressed using lectures, large and small group exercises, and case studies. Groups will discuss communication skills for ensuring appropriate transfer of care, dealing with anger and mistrust, disclosing individual and team errors, working with patients to address their concerns and prevent unrecognized conditions and misdiagnoses, and closing the gap between hospital discharge and subsequent complications. Critical skills in behaving empathetically, listening, apologizing, understanding and disarming aggression, encouraging shared decision making, ethical reasoning, and professionalism will be discussed. Other topics will include strategies to address

current communication challenges such as cultural sensitivities, communicating by telephone and computer (electronic) means, and gender perspectives. Finally, the role of communication in leadership and strategies to share effective communication techniques with others at your institution will be addressed.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF SKILLS AND INDIVIDUALIZED FEEDBACK

Participants will also be given the opportunity to practice their verbal and nonverbal skills with actors in surgical situations. Scenarios will be assigned in advance to allow participants to consider the situation and practice their responses before videotaping in a supportive environment. In addition, participants will be given the opportunity to demonstrate responses in impromptu scenarios and receive constructive feedback. Actors will be used in scenarios such as adverse outcomes and errors (yours and other team members'), angry or litigious patients and families, critical handoffs under tense circumstances, patients insisting on inappropriate care or refusing treatment, ordinary tasks gone awry, educating patients about unavoidable adverse outcomes, and grieving family members. Illustrative cases will be shared and discussed with the whole group to emphasize important principles and strategies. One-to-one feedback interviews with expert faculty will be provided to assist each participant with the self-assessment process, the analyses of skills in difficult situations, and development of plans to further enhance skills.

# FACULTY



## L. D. BRITT, MD, MPH, FACS, COURSE CHAIR

Dr. Britt, a graduate of Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Public Health, is the Brickhouse Professor and chair of the department of surgery at Eastern Virginia Medical School. He is the author of more than 170 scientific publications. In addition to being a reviewer for the *New England Journal of Medicine*, he serves on numerous editorial boards, including *Annals of Surgery*, *Archives of Surgery*, *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*, *American Journal of Surgery* (Associate Editor), *Surgery*, *Journal of Trauma*, *Shock*, *Journal of Surgical Education*, *American Surgeon*, and others. Dr. Britt is a recipient of the Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teaching Award, given by the Association of American Medical Colleges in conjunction with Alpha Omega Alpha. He was also recently honored by the Association for Surgical Education with its lifetime achievement award, the Distinguished Educator Award, given annually to one person considered by peers to be a true master. More than 120 institutions throughout the world have invited him to be a distinguished visiting professor. Dr. Britt has served as president of numerous national organizations such as the Society of Surgical Chairs and the Halsted Society and just completed his term as chair of ACGME Residency Review Committee for Surgery. Dr. Britt is currently vice-chair of the Board of Regents of the American College of Surgeons, a director of the American Board of Surgery, and member of the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar Program National Advisory Committee. He was recognized by President George W. Bush for his leadership role in medicine and, most recently, by the National Library of Medicine for his contributions to academic surgery.

## THOMAS R. GADACZ, MD, FACS, COURSE DIRECTOR

Dr. Gadacz attended medical school at St. Louis University School of Medicine and completed a surgery residency at the University of California, San Francisco, and a fellowship in gastroenterology at the Mayo Clinic. He is professor emeritus at the Medical College of Georgia. He held positions as Moretz-Mansberger Professor and chairman of surgery and program director of the general surgery residency program at the Medical College of Georgia from 1991 to 2004. Prior to joining the Medical College of Georgia, he served as professor of surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital and as chief of the surgical service at Baltimore Veterans Affairs Medical Center. He also held academic appointments at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. He is the past president of the Southeastern Surgical Congress, the Georgia and Maryland chapters of the American College of Surgeons, the Georgia Surgical Society, and the Baltimore Academy of Surgeons. He served as governor of the Georgia Chapter of the American College of Surgeons and was chairman of the Board of Governors Committee on Socioeconomic Issues. Dr. Gadacz has received grant support from the National Institutes of Health, the Veterans Administration, the State of Georgia, and many corporations. He has authored more than 120 published articles and 80 book chapters. He is a member of several editorial boards and serves as reviewer for numerous journals.

## REBECCA C. BRITT, MD, FACS

Dr. Britt is a graduate of Eastern Virginia Medical School and completed a general surgery residency at Boston University. She then completed a critical care fellowship at Eastern Virginia Medical School and participated in advanced laparoscopic training at Emory University. She is currently an assistant professor of surgery at Eastern Virginia Medical School, where she is the program director for critical care surgery and also heads the simulation program. Her research interests include simulation in education as well as surgical critical care.

## THOMAS F. DODSON, MD, FACS

Dr. Dodson is professor of surgery in the department of surgery at Emory University School of Medicine. He also serves as associate chairman of the department of surgery and as program director of the surgery residency program. He attended medical school at the University of Alabama School of Medicine and completed his residency at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Dodson completed two fellowships, the first in research in surgical oncology at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the second in vascular surgery at Emory University. Prior to joining Emory, Dr. Dodson served on the surgical faculties of the University of Massachusetts and New England Deaconess at Harvard Medical School. He is the author of more than 100 publications and has won outstanding teaching awards at each of the three medical schools where he served as a faculty member.

## F. DEAN GRIFFEN, MD, FACS

Dr. Griffen is a graduate of Louisiana State University Medical School in New Orleans and received his training in general surgery at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in Shreveport (LSUHSC-S). Following two years in the Navy, he practiced clinical surgery in Shreveport at the Highland Clinic for 34 years. Currently, he is professor of clinical surgery at LSUHSC-S, where he attends a general surgery service and is director of undergraduate surgical education and the LSU simulation lab. Dr. Griffen has served as a Governor of the American College of Surgeons, chair of the Governors' Committee on Professional Liability, and chair of the ACS Patient Safety and Professional Liability Committee. Currently, he is vice-chair of the Public Profile and Communications Steering Committee, and is a member of the Health Policy Steering Committee for which he serves as patient safety advisor. He is the ACS representative on the steering committee of Doctors for Medical Liability Reform and serves as treasurer.

## E. PHILLIPS POLACK, MD, MA, FACS

Dr. Polack attended medical school at West Virginia University, completed residencies in general surgery at Boston University and plastic surgery at Duke University, as well as a fellowship in hand surgery at the University of Louisville. He is clinical professor of surgery at West Virginia University and a practicing plastic surgeon at Wheeling Hospital, Wheeling, WV. His clinical research interests include both pigmented and nonpigmented cutaneous malignancies. In 2006, Dr. Polack received a master's degree in organizational and corporate communication from West Virginia University and since that time has developed seminars on effective communication for physicians and health practitioners. In addition, he is the recipient of a grant to study handoff communication and communication of surgeons during the "golden hour of trauma" and has coauthored a book on applied communication behavior for health professionals. Dr. Polack has made a number of presentations regarding applied medical communication at academic institutions nationally and recently presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Surgical Forum. He currently serves as a governor of the American College of Surgeons.

## STAFF CONSULTANTS

AJIT K. SACHDEVA, MD, FRCSC, FACS, Director, Division of Education

PATRICE GABLER BLAIR, MPH, Associate Director, Division of Education

# APPLICATION INFORMATION

## COURSE REGISTRATION

Please complete the application form and submit it to Ms. Emily Bakken, Administrative Assistant, Division of Education, American College of Surgeons, by facsimile or mail, as detailed on the application form. Applications must be received no later than Wednesday, February 27, 2008. Faxes and envelopes with postmarks after this date will not be considered.

## ENROLLMENT

The course is limited to 30 participants. Letters of notification regarding acceptance will be mailed by Friday, February 29, 2008. All participants are expected to attend the entire course and remain until the conclusion of the course.

## COURSE FEE

Please do not include payment when submitting the application form. Full payment of the course fee of \$1,550 for ACS members and \$1,850 for nonmembers will be due upon acceptance into the course. The fee covers tuition, all course materials, and meals except for two evenings. Course participants must submit full payment by Friday, March 21, 2008, to reserve their place in the course. Additional details will be enclosed with the notification letters.

## COURSE CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

Participants who find it necessary to cancel their registrations will not receive a refund unless an alternate from the course's official waiting list can be confirmed.

## COURSE LOCATION

The course will be held in the offices of the American College of Surgeons, 633 N. Saint Clair St., Chicago, IL. Hotel accommodations will be available at the Wyndham Hotel Chicago at the same address. Dress will be business casual.

## HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

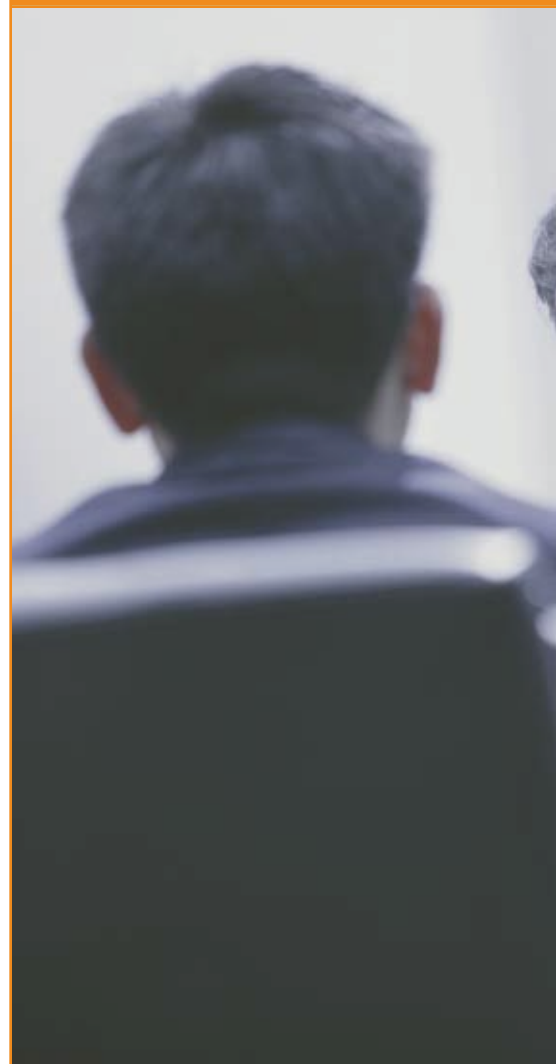
Hotel reservations can be made by contacting the Wyndham Hotel Chicago directly at 312/573-0300. To obtain the American College of Surgeons group rate of \$225 plus tax per night for a single or double room, you must make your reservations no later than Tuesday, March 11, 2008. The hotel will only honor these rates until the room block fills or until Tuesday, March 11, 2008.

## ACCREDITATION/CME CREDIT

The American College of Surgeons is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) to provide continuing medical education (CME) for physicians. *AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™* will be available for this course.

## QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, or would like special accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, please contact Ms. Emily Bakken by e-mail at [ebakken@facs.org](mailto:ebakken@facs.org) or by telephone at 312/202-5119.





# APPLICATION FORM

MINIMIZING LIABILITY  
AND ENHANCING  
SURGICAL OUTCOMES  
THROUGH EFFECTIVE  
COMMUNICATION

APRIL 4-7, 2008



FIRST NAME MIDDLE INITIAL LAST NAME

PROFESSIONAL DEGREE

SURGICAL SPECIALTY

POSITION/TITLE

DEPARTMENT

INSTITUTION

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

HOME PHONE WORK PHONE

FAX E-MAIL ADDRESS

## ACS MEMBERSHIP

- FACS (\$1,550)
- Nonmember (\$1,850)

## ACADEMIC FACULTY RANK

- Professor
- Associate Professor
- Assistant Professor
- Instructor

## COMMUNITY PRACTICE SETTING

- Yes  No

NUMBER OF YEARS IN PRACTICE \_\_\_\_\_

## MAIL OR FAX TO

Emily Bakken  
Administrative Assistant  
Division of Education  
American College of Surgeons  
633 N. Saint Clair St.,  
Chicago, IL 60611-3211

PHONE 312/202-5119  
FAX 312/202-5011

## APPLICATION DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 27, 2008

Please do not include payment when submitting this application form. Full payment will be due upon acceptance into the course.



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS 633 N. SAINT CLAIR ST. CHICAGO, IL 60611-3211