



**Workshop name**

**Mastering Professional Interactions**

Reducing risk of litigation through effective communication with colleagues

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**Target audience**

General Practitioners and Specialists

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**Duration**

2 hours

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**Number of participants**

Optimum 7-15

Minimum 5

Maximum 25

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**Other recommended workshops**

**Workshops recommended to be undertaken before or after this workshop**

- Mastering Your Risk
- Mastering Difficult Clinical Interactions

See overviews at [www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au](http://www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au)

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**Continuing medical education**

Refer to College Accreditation and Points Document at [www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au](http://www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au) or email [enquiries@cognitiveinstitute.com.au](mailto:enquiries@cognitiveinstitute.com.au)

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**Format**

The workshop uses brief lectures, a review of the salient literature, audios, videos and interactive activities. Examples are presented from various high risk Doctor-Doctor interactions to trigger reflection, analysis and planning for correcting any perceived deficits. Participants work through real life examples and generate appropriate responses and actions to reduce exposure in high risk Doctor-Doctor interactions.

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**Presenter**

All presenters of Cognitive Institute workshops are General Practitioners or Specialists who have a specific interest in communication skills and have undertaken formal communication skills training with the Institute.

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**Objectives**

- To explore what types of communication between Doctors contributes to their mutual risk
  - To examine insights from the literature and claims experience of medical indemnity organisations to heighten participants' awareness of the risk factors
  - To understand the role of effective clinical handover in reducing risk
  - To encourage participants to reflect on how their personal action in high risk inter-professional communication can reduce their risk
  - To identify the barriers to effective communication between Doctors
  - Examine Cognitive Institute's checklists to assist in reducing risk at clinical handover
  - To understand the potential areas of conflict that can increase risk when Doctors communicate with each other
  - To explore techniques to resolve inter-professional conflict
  - To rehearse formulating an effective response to a disagreement with a colleague in a way that does not increase risk to patients or Doctors.
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## Benefits

- More effective understanding of risk (as it relates to Doctor-Doctor communication)
  - Opportunity to address issues that can cause destructive disagreements between Doctors and subsequent increased risk of litigation
  - Skills in working with colleagues to improve communication for the benefit of all parties
  - Better Doctor-Doctor relationships
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## Overview

Communication performance has long been identified as a major risk factor for the individual litigation risk of a Doctor.

Increasingly, analysis from the literature, expert opinion, and medical indemnity organisations and patient complaints management bodies has identified Doctor to Doctor communication as a significant source of risk.

The risk concentrates into two major areas - when handover of patient care occurs and when there is significant disagreement about the management of a patient provided by a colleague. In addition, some Doctor-Doctor interactions carry higher risk and this needs to be accounted for in the time and effort allocated to the communication.

### **This workshop addresses these two areas of risk by:**

- Exploring the nature of the risk to Doctors
- Providing opportunity for reflection on personal attitudes and behaviours in this area of risk
- Examining strategies to reduce the risk

*Poor communication performance is a major predisposing factor for litigation*

*Hickson 2002, Beckman 1994, Ambady 2002*

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*Common recurring factors in Doctor-Doctor communication are increasingly being recognised as significant contributors to patients' assessments that they have received poor care*

*Hickson 2002, Dinwoodie 2005*

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*One third of patients litigating were urged to do so by another Doctor*

*Hickson 1994*

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Modern healthcare requires effective handover of care between Doctors, whether it be:

- referral to a colleague from a different speciality
- handing patient care back to the original referring Doctor
- involving a colleague in the care of a patient while you remain the treating Doctor
- referral to a colleague for a radiological or pathological investigation
- handing over and taking back the care of a patient from a colleague in the same specialty who has been providing cover for you

The workshop also explores the way in which poor communication with colleagues translates to patient risk:

- abnormal investigations not acted on
- wrong diagnosis made or wrong investigation/treatment undertaken
- high risk treatments not effectively monitored
- predictable complications not recognised
- significant co-morbidities not taken into decisions regarding investigation and treatment
- unnecessary investigation and treatment
- increased hospital length of stay

The barriers to effective communication between colleagues are explored and opportunities to reflect on strategies participants might use to assist in overcoming these barriers are presented.

Participants are then introduced to the Cognitive Institute's "Handing Over"® and "Handing Back"® checklists to assist them to effectively manage handovers.

Participants are also given advice as to what actions may be effective when they perceive that a colleague is not handing over adequately.

Common areas of potential disagreement between Doctors include:

- diagnosis
- treatment
- acceptable risk and perceived benefits of proposed treatments
- interpretation of investigations
- degree to which investigations/treatments should be pursued
- boundaries around provision of care

Strategies to resolve differences of opinion in ways that do not lead to increased risk for patients and each other are then presented along with the opportunity to rehearse responses participants may find effective when they find themselves in disagreement with a colleague.

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For information on the Cognitive Institute, presenters and workshops visit [www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au](http://www.cognitiveinstitute.com.au)

To book a workshop call Head Office on 61 7 3876 5711  
or email [enquiries@cognitiveinstitute.com.au](mailto:enquiries@cognitiveinstitute.com.au)

