

Understanding teamwork in EMS: *Why do you get to complete the chart while I get covered in meconium*



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The Real Questions

- Who am I?
- Who are you ?
- Why are you here today ?

What we will cover today

- Understanding teams and teamwork
- How we think of teams
- Team development
- Making it work
- Conclusions



Definitions

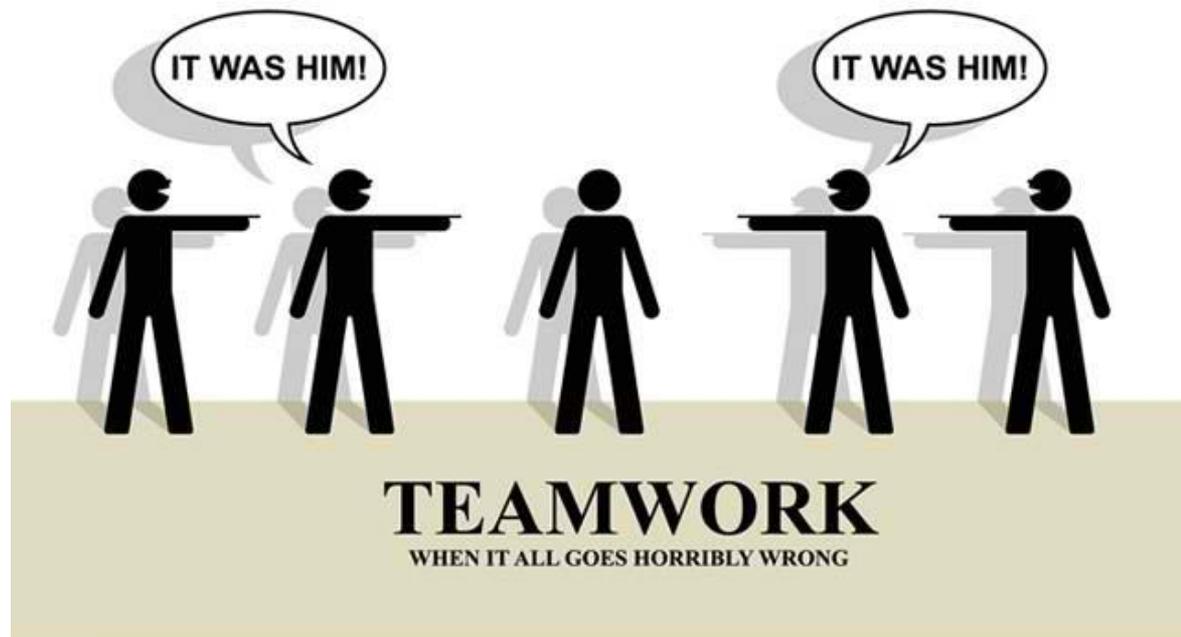
- Teamwork
 - the work done by people who work together as a team to do something
 - work done by several associates with each doing a part but all subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole
 - *Merriam-Webster's dictionary*

Teamwork what Is It?

- A team is defined as a group (a collection of people) who interact to achieve a common goal. *But an effective, well-functioning team is much more than this.*
- Participants in an effective team care about the group's well-being. *They skillfully combine appropriate individual talents with a positive team spirit to achieve results.*
- Regardless of whether the program effort is that of an individual, several individuals or the entire unit, a climate of teamwork can exist.

Definitions

- So, how you define teamwork ?



Teamwork defined

- Communication
- Common goals
- Maturity
- Trust
- Respect
- Working together to solve problems
- Equal burden of responsibilities

Your opinion

- Is there such a thing as “teamwork” in EMS ?



How we tend to think of teams



Complex teams



Teams in EMS?



Let's figure this out

- Defining Teamwork for EMS
 - Teams are defined as two or more individuals who interact and coordinate their EMS work to accomplish a shared goal or purpose.
 - Teams are EMS organizational groups composed of individuals or members of the team who share common goals and who coordinate their activities to accomplish the goals and response requirements.
 - Additionally, the EMS team shares mission requirements and collective responsibilities.

Team research in EMS

- *“Teams and teamwork, although a major part of the medical delivery system, usually are not included in training, outcome measures, or rigorous quality improvement efforts”*

- Air Med Journal. 1999 Oct-Dec.
Teamwork in Emergency Medical Services.

Team research in EMS

- *"Frequent turnover in partnerships can disrupt team cohesiveness, influence behavior, and threaten safety"*
 - Prehospital Emergency Care. 2012 January
Measuring teamwork and conflict among Emergency Medical Technician personnel

Why we need teams in EMS

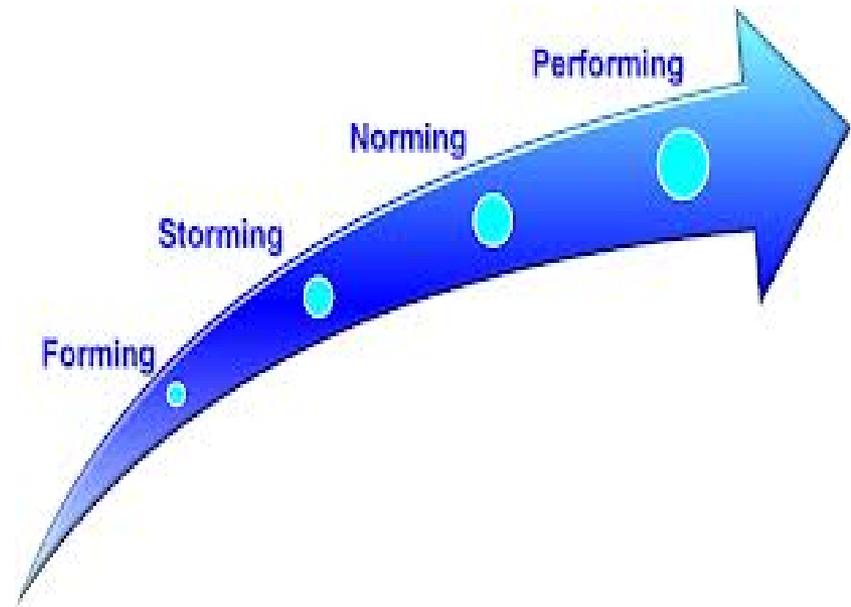
- Research on the effectiveness of organizational teams has suggested that the use of teams leads to greater productivity, more effective use of resources, better decisions and problem solving, better services, and increased innovation and creativity.
- In an EMS team, leadership is shared between individuals of the crew to ensure effective response to critical EMS-related situations

Understanding teamwork

- Additionally, trust is based on honesty, openness, consistency and respect, which is essential to building a collaborative climate so EMS team members can stay focused, be open with one another, listen to each other, feel free to take appropriate risks and be willing to compensate for each other.

Team development

- Team development goes through four distinct stages:
 - forming
 - storming
 - norming
 - performing



Team forming

- When a team is forming, members cautiously explore the boundaries of acceptable group behavior.
- They search for their position within the group and test the leader's guidance. It is normal for little team progress to occur during this stage.

Team storming

- Storming is probably the most difficult stage for the group. Members often become impatient about the lack of progress, but are still inexperienced with working as a team.
- Members may argue about the actions they should take because they faced with ideas that are unfamiliar to them and put them outside their comfort zones.
- Much of their energy is focused on each other instead of achieving the goal.

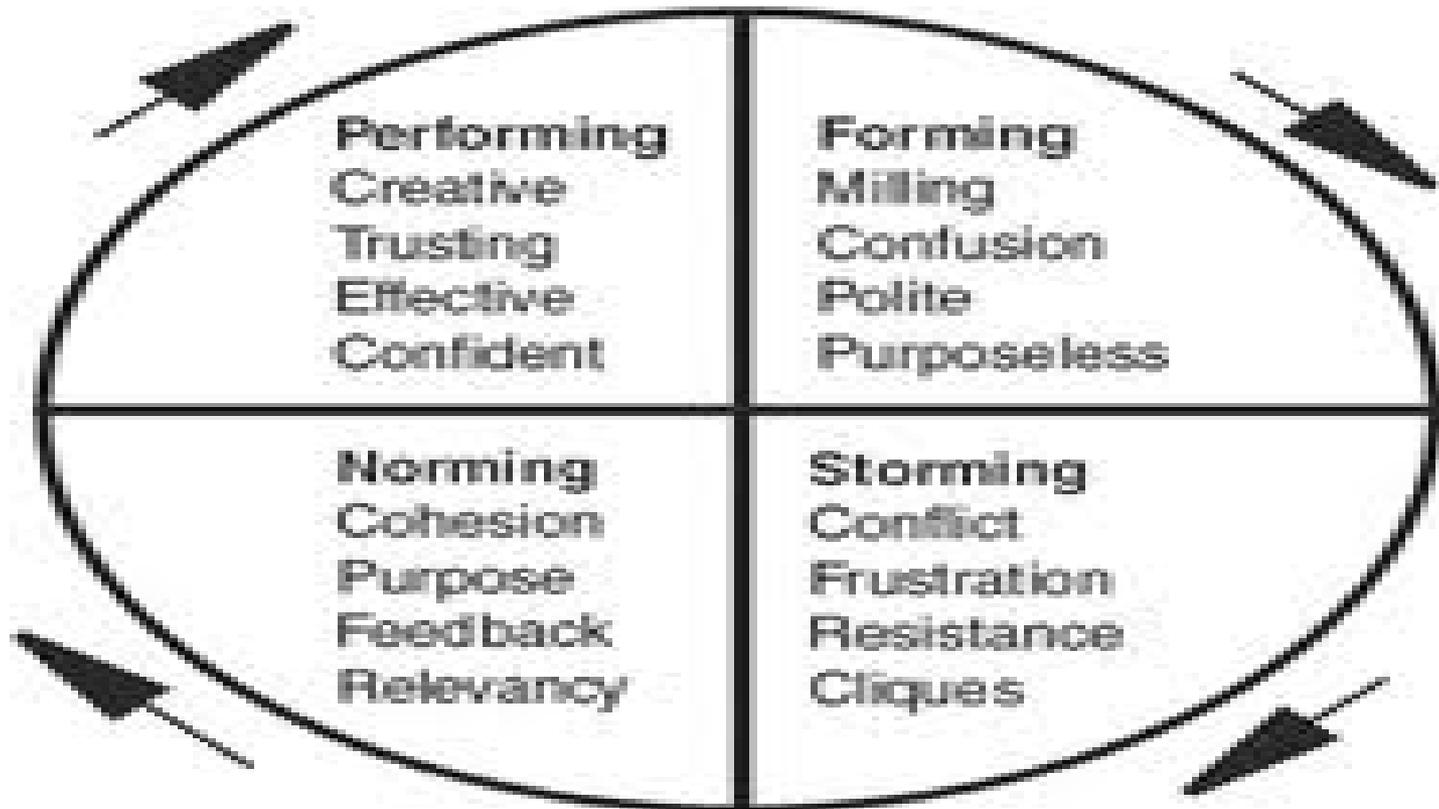
Team norming

- During this stage team members accept the team and begin to reconcile differences.
- Emotional conflict is reduced as relationships become more cooperative.
- The team is able to concentrate more on their work and start to make significant progress

Team performing

- By this stage the team members have discovered and accepted each other's strengths and weaknesses, and learned what their roles are.
- Members are open and trusting and many good ideas are produced because they are not afraid to offer ideas and suggestions.
- They are comfortable using decision making tools to evaluate the ideas, prioritize tasks and solve problems. Much is accomplished and team satisfaction and loyalty is high.

Team development



What stands in the way

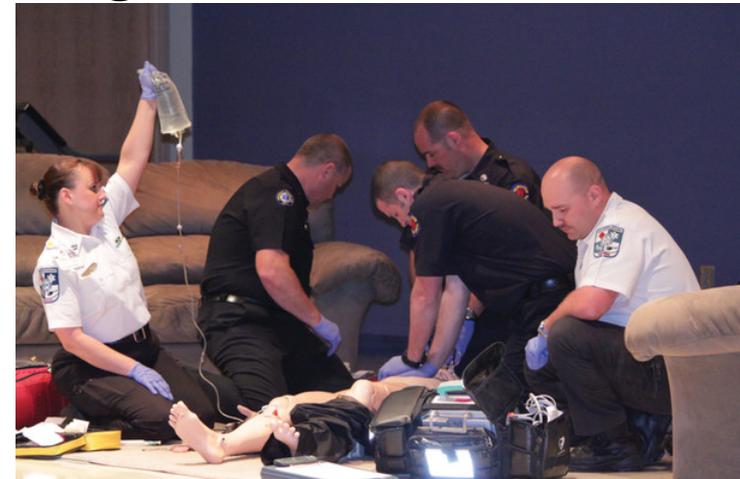
- Lack of understanding of others' jobs and responsibilities
- Lack of concern about total staff efforts
- Disregard for feelings of others
- Unwillingness to compromise
- Poor communication
- Competition among staff for individual prestige and recognition
- Negative and destructive criticism
- No involvement in administrative decisions
- Lack of leadership
- Over- sensitivity
- Lack of privacy
- Disregard for talents of others
- No job descriptions
- No opportunities for staff meeting

What stands in the way

- Gossip, rumors
- Putting off decision making
- Inequities in facilities and supplies
- Lack of trust
- Negative and sarcastic remarks
- Lack of common goals and philosophy
- Disloyalty to staff and organization
- No evaluation and/or feedback from supervisors
- Limited understanding of total program
- Holding a grudge
- Poor job attitudes
- Uneven work loads
- Lack of confidence in fellow workers
- Prejudice, racism, sexism

New concepts

- Pit crew concept/assigned task model
 - Each crew member has a defined role, which they perform in practiced harmony to get their driver back into race a tenth of a second faster than the next guy. It goes a long way toward winning races, and it could do the same for saving lives.



New concepts

- The 'assigned task' model is commonly used for cardiac arrest management, as well as many other high-complexity tactical operations and processes
- By strict assignment of tasks, outcomes are improved and objectives accomplished in areas such as hospital-based trauma resuscitation; vehicle extrication; urban search and rescue; and tactical medicine and firefighting, to name a few.

New concepts

- Of course, every operational environment will require adjustment of the model, including use of more flexible parameters, if indicated.
- All of this supports the concept of EMS crews working as a team, rather than a collection of individuals with no clear direction.

New concepts

- The key - ensuring teams believe the overall process will improve by eliminating individual will and adopting a disciplined team approach

Characteristics of Effective Teams

- The following are eight characteristics of effective teams that were identified by Larson and LaFasto in their book titled *Teamwork: What Must Go Right/What Can Go Wrong* (Sage Publications 1989).



Making it work

- **The team must have a clear goal.**
 - Avoid fuzzy, motherhood statements. Team goals should call for a specific performance objective, expressed so concisely that everyone knows when the objective has been met.



GOALS
It's important to set them.

Making it work

- **The team must have a results-driven structure.**
 - The team should be allowed to operate in a manner that produces results. It is often best to allow the team to develop the structure.

Making it work

- **The team must have competent team members.**
 - This can be taken to mean that the problem given to the team should be one that the members can tackle given their level of knowledge.



"My incompetence will become the basis of your appeal."

Making it work

- **The team must have unified commitment.**
 - This doesn't mean that team members must agree on everything. It means that all individuals must be directing their efforts towards the goal. If an individual's efforts is going purely towards personal goals, then the team will confront this and resolve the problem.

Making it work

- **The team must have a collaborative climate.**
 - It is a climate of trust produced by honest, open, consistent and respectful behavior. With this climate teams perform well...without it, they.....well, we know.



Making it work

- **The team must have high standards that are understood by all.**
 - Team members must know what is expected of them individually and collectively. Vague statements such as "positive attitude" and "demonstrated effort" are not good enough.

Making it work

- **The team must receive external support and encouragement.**
 - Encouragement and praise works just as well in motivating teams as it does with individuals.

Making it work

- **The team must have principled leadership.**
 - Teams usually need someone to lead the effort. Team members must know that the team leader has the position because they have good leadership skills and are working for the good of the team. The team members will be less supportive if they feel that the team leader is putting him/herself above the team, achieving personal recognition or otherwise benefiting from the position.

Conclusions

- The team is what you make it

Questions?



Thank you...

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