

# Dealing with conflicts within MDTs

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# Overview

- Characteristics of effective Multidisciplinary teams
- Barriers to optimal functioning and reasons for conflict
- Approaches to managing conflict: research evidence
- Practical guidelines
- Benefits of a conflict-free MDT

# Characteristics of an Effective MDT:

## Recommended guidelines

- Chair has skills in:
  - Meeting management
  - Listening and communication
  - Interpersonal relationships and promoting mutual professional respect amongst members
  - Managing disruptive personalities & conflict
  - Negotiations
  - Facilitating effective consensual clinical decision-making
  - Time management

# Characteristics of an Effective MDT: Recommended guidelines

- Team agreed on acceptable behaviour/etiquette:
  - Mutual respect and trust between team members
  - Equal voice for all members with different opinions valued
  - Resolution of conflict between members
  - Encouragement of constructive discussion/debate
  - Absence of personal agendas
  - Ability to request and provide clarification

# Effective MDTs: 90% agreement in UK

- Good leadership is a prerequisite for effective teamwork
- Being a team member not solely confined to meeting attendance
- Teams have an important role in sharing, learning and best practice with peers
- Team working is beneficial to the mental health of members
- Teams provide an opportunity for the education and learning for staff in all disciplines
- Standard treatment protocols should be used whenever possible
- Patients needs and views should always inform the decision making process
- Adequate infrastructure to support teams



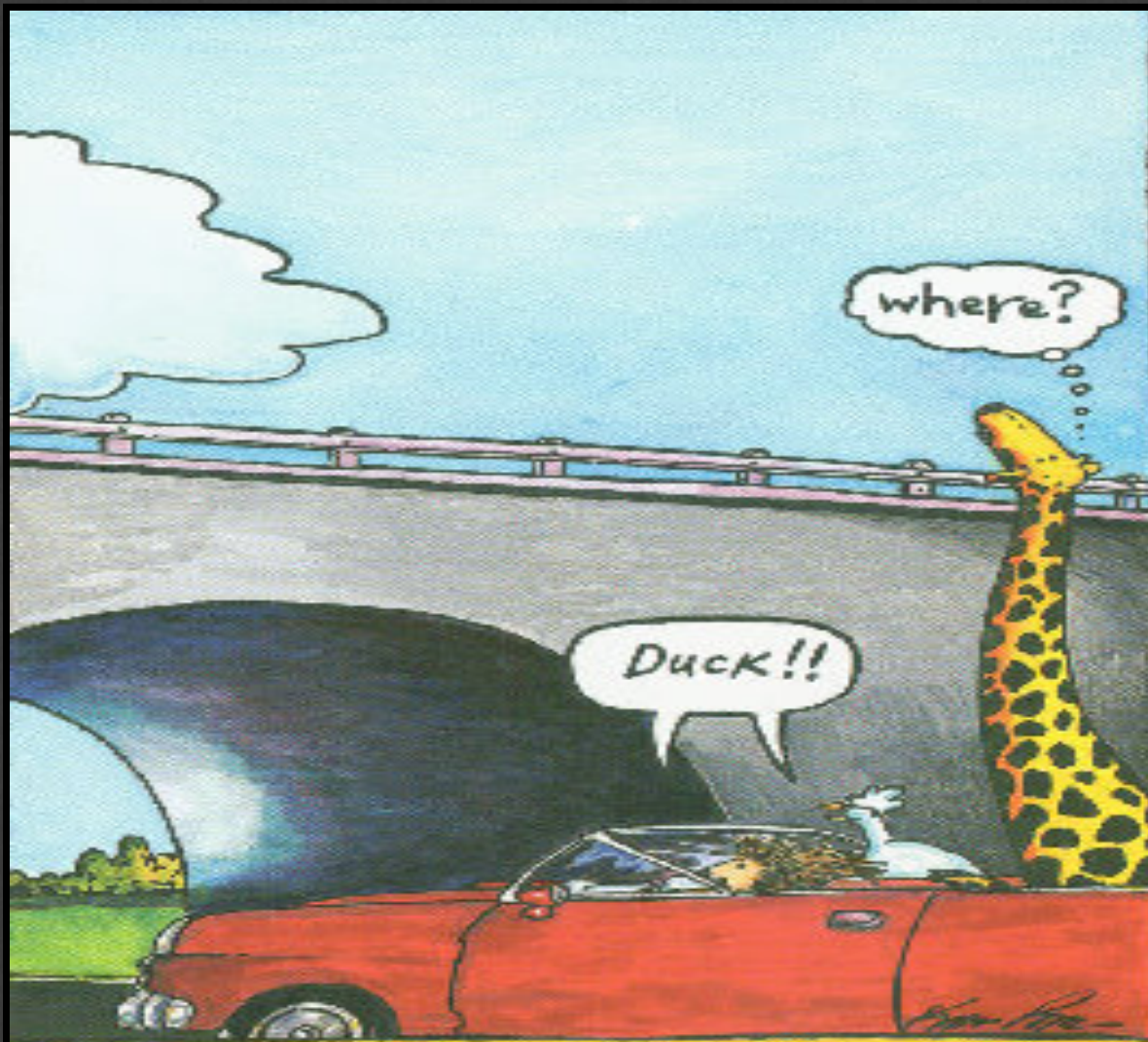
# Barriers to optimal functioning

- Inadequate/insufficient leadership
- Professional enmities or lack of recognition input from all craft groups (eg nursing)
- Difficult personalities
- Hierarchical structures making teams dysfunctional and attendance stressful
- Interruption or distraction
- Workload and Burnout
- Lack of resources

# Managing conflict within medical teams: The evidence

- Dominating lead to positive and negative emotions
- Avoidance lead to negative emotions only
- Cooperative (integrating and compromising) lead to positive emotion
- N=331 in 69 medical teams

# Conflict resolution: Communication



Unfortunately, animals sometimes lack the necessary skills to communicate with each other.



# The Expert Chair

A detailed image of a fish skeleton, likely a carp, shown from the side against a solid black background. The skeleton is complete, showing the skull, spine, ribs, and the structure of the fins. The text is overlaid on the middle of the skeleton.

A fish always rots from the head down

- English Proverb

Grandma Beb

# Golden rules of expert facilitation

- Establish a collaborative culture
- Shutting down counter productive input *swiftly*
- Apply evidence/ best practice guidelines
- Take it off line
- Be generous

# Establishing a collaborative culture

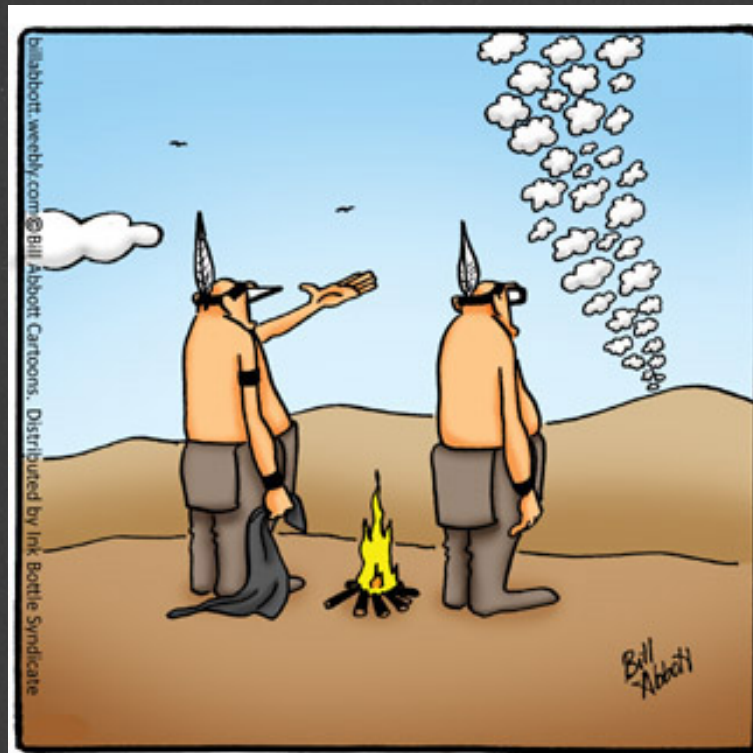
*You attract more bees with honey than vinegar – Grandma Beb*



- Facilitator “Group care-taker” should show genuineness, acceptance and positive regard
  - Create a trusting environment
  - Trust the abilities of team members
  - Balance individual and group needs
  - Model a relaxed, authentic presence
  - Allow others to be wise
  - Use humour
  - Ensure the emotional safety of all members



# Shutting down counter productive input



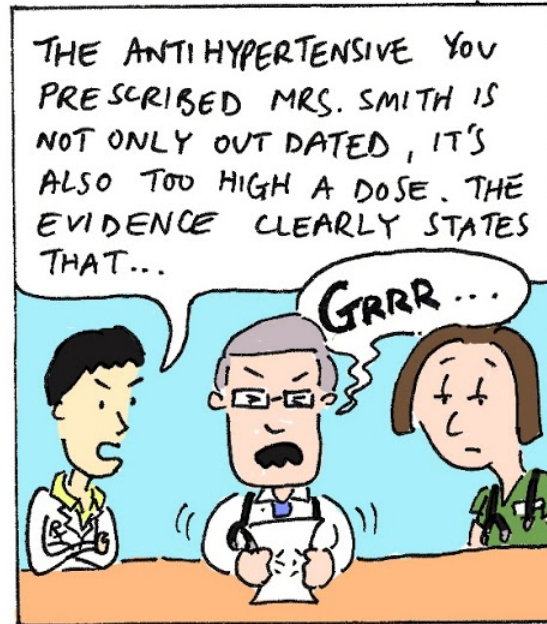
“See what I mean? Why does she call me when she won’t let me get a word in edgewise?”



# Countering Blocking behaviours

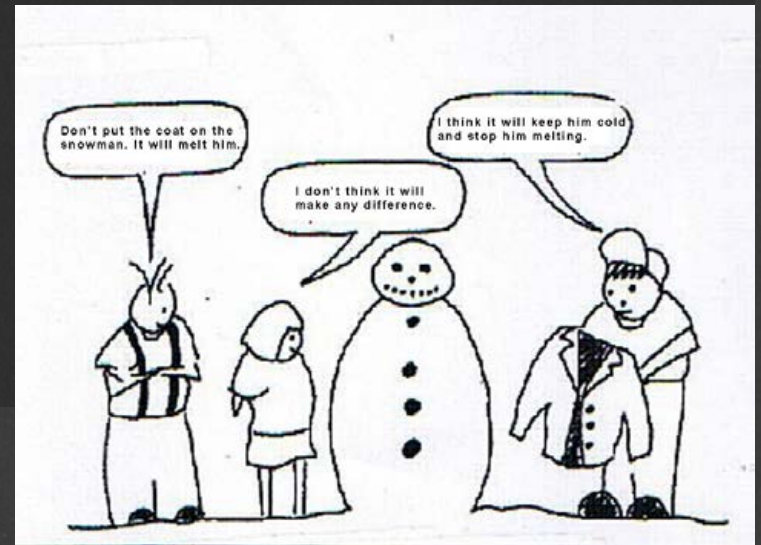
- Interrupting
- Monopolising
- Part listening (doing email)
- Disruptions (taking phone calls)
- Changing the subject / ignoring cues
- Mind reading (making assumptions)

- Redirecting to allow person to finish
- Turning away; asking for other opinions
- Reminding members to focus on the discussion at beginning
- Practice active listening to speaker; allowing them to finish
- Summarising to check understanding



# Access to up to date evidence

- Increasingly, best practice treatment pathways and research practices are available
- Clinician decision aid support, eg APPs for appropriate medication decisions





# Taking it 'off line'



“A stitch in time saves nine”

My Grandma Beb



# General skills to resolve conflict



- Asking open questions and express empathy- “How are you feeling?” (VS “Are you feeling OK?”)
- Acknowledge and normalise emotions - “I can see you are quite upset right now”
- Explore source of the emotion - “What are your main concerns at present?”
- Allow pauses and silence
- Checking your understanding - “So you mean...?”
- Explore options to resolve situation
- Offer to mediate a conversation or ‘role-play’ discussion

# Responding to anger



- Stay calm - breathe deeply
- Do not respond via email !
- Do not take it personally / get defensive / argue
- Explore reasons for anger
- Focus on their needs, not their manner or words
- Apologise if it is your fault
- Indicate your desire to address their concerns
- Brainstorm options and offer help
- Look for other emotions (fear, sadness) and explore appropriately

# Be generous



- Actively elicit others views, especially from junior team members
- Endorse good suggestions
- Seek opposing views to your own
- Offer consensus position and seek feedback
- Allow others to take the 'limelight' especially in authorship

# Benefits of effective MDTs

- More evidence based recommendations and more timely treatment
- Improved cancer survival
- Improved patient information access, experience and satisfaction
- Enhanced cooperation and communication within the team
- Enriched continuing professional education and professional development opportunities
- Lower workplace stress and professional burnout
- Innovative research which solves real world problems



# Conclusions

- Inclusive, effective, collaborative MDT have the power to achieve optimal outcomes for patient care and research
- Top down and bottom up process
- Everyone benefits: improved patient outcomes, less stress, lower burnout, greater capacity building , greater professional satisfaction and world class research