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# Correcting Mistakes in Your Work: It's Vital


The human brain is quite amazing. Even when words are spelled incorrectly, our brain will still comprehend what the message is as long as all the letters are there. Somehow our brain rearranges the letters subconsciously and we can understand this foreign language.

At this point, you are probably smiling because you could read and understand the opening of this article. The human brain really is an amazing tool, but in the medical world, communication of diagnosis, measurements, words, and sentences need to be exact. Precision and care are necessary to be effective and successful in any medical profession. In fact, careless and casual work in the medical field is harmful and can even be deadly.

Let's look at an example: Steve has a history of low blood pressure, and recently he had experienced dizziness, lightheadedness, nausea, and cold, clammy skin. He had also fainted twice in the last three weeks. Steve knows that low blood pressure runs in his family; however, no family member has ever been treated or hospitalized for it. In light of the recent events—especially the fainting episodes—his wife prodded him to visit his doctor. Steve gave in to her pleadings and scheduled an appointment. During his visit, Steve informed his doctor of the recent fainting episodes, whereupon his doctor asked him if he had been

experiencing any other difficulties. Steve told him about the dizziness, lightheadedness, and nausea. His doctor noticed that his skin was pale, so he felt Steve's hands and feet. They felt cold and clammy. They talked about Steve's low blood pressure, and the doctor decided that it had dropped too low, dangerously low. He felt that it was time that Steve begin taking 10 mg of midodrine three times a day to help raise his blood pressure to normal levels.

Steve was sent home and informed that the pharmacy would call him when his prescription was ready to be picked up. As Steve left the clinic, the doctor dictated the details of Steve's visit, and the sound file was sent to the medical transcriptionist to be transcribed. The transcriptionist was already behind on the sound files for the day and rushed through the dictation of Steve's visit. When the transcriptionist reached the part regarding the prescription dosage, working hurriedly, she misheard the actual dosage and typed 30 mg three times a day instead of 10 mg three times a day. She didn't take time to edit the report and sent it back to the clinic to be added to Steve's file. The prescription was called into the pharmacy, and Steve later picked up his 30 mg three-times-a-day prescription of midodrine. Steve, unaware of the mistake, began taking his new prescription the following morning. He started to get



a headache about an hour after taking the medication. He took his second dose just after noon and his third dose before dinner. When he lay down to go to bed, his headache became unbearable and his wife took him to the hospital. Before Steve arrived at the hospital he had a major stroke, caused by an overdose of midodrine.

The rushed actions of the transcriptionist appeared to be rather small, but they had a very large, very serious consequence. Small errors in the medical world will often have a large impact. When attention isn't given to detail, mistakes are made and patients' lives are affected; this is why everyone in the medical field must pay extreme attention to detail.

Editing and proofreading skills are an important part of being detail-oriented. For some people, editing and proofreading skills come naturally. For most of us, we have to learn these skills and acquire them over time. Here are some tips for learning and acquiring editing and proofreading skills.

- Practice, practice, practice. Practice looking for errors in written materials all around you. These may include things like the local newspaper, advertising signs on the side of the road, and the news ticker on your television. You'll be amazed at the number of errors you see.

- Read a wide variety of books, journals, and magazines. Exposure to correctly written materials will help you acquire and hone your proofreading skills.
- Write in a journal following grammatical and spelling rules, or write letters to friends frequently. Writing is a good way to practice editing and proofreading skills and to make those skills your own.
- Verify—never guess. If you are unsure of something, make a note of it and look it up or ask a friend who is known for being grammatically correct.
- Know the basics. Study and learn the rules of grammar and style.
- Train the ear. Study and learn how to differentiate words.
- Be careful and don't be too rushed.

These are just a few ideas in helping to learn and acquire editing and proofreading skills. There are many other methods and principles that are effective in learning these important skills. The ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing will greatly impact your success in the medical world. It is vital to be correct and precise in your work, and if you miss anything the first time, catch it when you proof your work. Remember it is important not to miss any mistakes or errors. **P**