**Script\_ Conflict (H-PASS\_Module 2)**

**Slide 1:** Welcome to the Conflict Educational Module, part of the H-Pass Learning Unit of Module 2. In this session, we'll explore how conflict shapes the healthcare environment and how we can effectively manage it to improve teamwork and patient care.

**Slide 2:** In this module, we will explore a comprehensive range of topics essential for managing conflict effectively in healthcare settings. Our discussion will begin with an introduction to conflict, followed by its definition and nature. We will then delve into the various causes and types of conflict, examine the positive aspects that conflict can bring, and introduce the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model. Additionally, we will analyze different conflict management styles specific to healthcare environments before concluding with key takeaways.

**Slide 3:** Our primary learning objectives are designed to equip you with a deep understanding of conflict and its dynamics. Firstly, you will gain insight into what conflict is, its underlying causes, and how it manifests in interpersonal interactions. Secondly, you will recognize how well-managed conflict can drive improvement, foster innovation, and enhance mutual understanding among team members. Thirdly, we will explore the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model, allowing you to identify and differentiate between key conflict resolution styles: competing, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and compromising. Finally, you will learn practical conflict resolution methods tailored specifically for healthcare teams and settings, enabling you to apply these strategies effectively in your professional environment.

**Slide 4:** In this educational course, we will delve into a fundamental aspect of human interaction: conflict. Conflict is an inherent part of human interactions and exists in all facets of life—from personal relationships to professional settings. Although it can be uncomfortable, conflict also presents a valuable opportunity to confront issues, challenge assumptions, and initiate growth. For healthcare professionals, constructive conflict management is especially important, as it fosters stronger relationships, supports productivity, and ultimately benefits patient care. In this module, we’ll explore the nature, causes, and types of conflict, with an emphasis on practical strategies for healthcare settings. First, let’s start by defining conflict and understanding its fundamental characteristics.

**Slide 5:** The term "conflict" originates from the Latin word "conflictus," meaning a clash or collision. Fundamentally, conflict arises when two or more parties perceive their goals, interests, or values as incompatible. While conflict can cause discomfort, it also serves as a powerful catalyst for change. In essence, conflict involves a situation where differing perspectives or interests lead to disagreement or struggle. It can occur between individuals, groups, or organizations and may stem from differences in opinions, needs, resources, or values. Conflicts can range from mild disagreements to intense disputes and are often resolved through communication, negotiation, or other conflict management strategies.

**Slide 6:** Understanding why conflicts arise is crucial for effective management. Conflicts can stem from unmet basic needs, such as food or water, or from psychological needs like recognition and respect. Additionally, differing values or beliefs can lead to conflict, as what is important to one person may not hold the same significance for another. Competition over limited resources—be it time, money, or attention—can also be a significant source of conflict. These factors often create a perfect storm for conflicts to emerge, particularly in high-stakes environments like healthcare, where resources are frequently stretched and diverse perspectives converge.

**Slide 7:** It's important to recognise that not all conflict is detrimental. In fact, conflict can yield numerous positive outcomes when managed effectively. Positive conflict can enhance problem-solving abilities, clarify issues, increase participant involvement and commitment, and lead to better decisions or outcomes. For instance, conflict can encourage individuals to work harder, utilising their abilities, skills, and talents more effectively. It can also satisfy psychological needs such as dominance, esteem, and ego, providing a constructive outlet for aggressive tendencies. Moreover, conflict often generates creative ideas, driving innovation and benefiting both employees and the organization. It can instigate social and organizational change, keeping interpersonal and intergroup dynamics relevant and engaging. Additionally, conflict facilitates mutual understanding and group unity by enhancing problem-solving and coordination through healthy debate and the expression of needs. It also promotes group cooperation, inspires creativity, fosters opinion sharing and respect, prevents premature decision-making by encouraging deeper exploration of issues, and ultimately leads to mutual understanding and beneficial agreements for all parties involved.

**Slide 8:** The intensity of conflict can vary from mild disagreements to severe confrontations. Low-intensity conflicts, like minor disagreements among colleagues, are often resolved quickly. However, high-intensity conflicts, such as ongoing disputes rooted in strong emotions, can escalate and negatively impact the work environment. Understanding the degree of conflict helps determine the best approach for resolution. Next, let’s consider the specific causes and types of conflict that are commonly encountered in healthcare.

**Slide 9:** Having explored the nature and intensity of conflict, we now turn our attention to the specific causes that give rise to conflicts within the healthcare sector. Understanding these underlying factors is essential for effective conflict management and resolution.

**Slide 10:** Information conflicts occur when there is either insufficient or conflicting information available, leading to disagreements about what information is relevant or necessary. In the healthcare setting, this type of conflict can be particularly frustrating as it directly impacts the quality of care provided to patients. For example, lost or missing medical notes, prescriptions that lack important details, or poor handovers between staff can create significant issues. These information gaps can lead to misunderstandings, mistakes, or delays in patient care, making it imperative to address and prevent such conflicts early on to ensure seamless and effective healthcare delivery.

**Slide 11:** Value conflicts arise when individuals hold incompatible belief systems or attempt to impose their personal values onto others. In healthcare, a worker may have a set of values regarding the standard of care they believe should be delivered, but may find themselves constrained by time limitations and lack of resources, making it difficult to meet these standards. Since values are deeply held and often non-negotiable, this can lead to significant conflict between staff members and those they perceive as responsible for these constraints. Navigating these value conflicts requires sensitivity and a commitment to finding common ground while respecting individual beliefs and professional standards.

**Slide 12:** Interest conflicts emerge when there is competition over limited needs or resources such as money, time, or attention. In the healthcare environment, these conflicts are commonplace. For instance, patients and their families may feel that their needs should take precedence, leading to tension among staff members who are trying to allocate time fairly. Additionally, healthcare providers may experience internal conflicts over limited resources like funding, staff, or time, adding further strain to an already demanding environment. These conflicts are particularly challenging because they involve tangible, limited resources that are critical to meeting everyone's needs, necessitating careful management to ensure equitable and effective resource distribution.

**Slide 13:** Relationship conflicts are often driven by negative emotions such as distrust, misconceptions, or poor communication between individuals. In the high-stress environment of healthcare, these types of conflicts are especially prevalent. Whether the conflict occurs between colleagues or between staff and patients, the heightened emotions and stress can quickly give rise to negative feelings. It is crucial to address these relationship conflicts promptly, as unresolved issues can escalate, negatively impacting both the quality of patient care and the overall workplace atmosphere. Effective communication and emotional intelligence are key to mitigating and resolving relationship conflicts in healthcare settings.

**Slide 14:** Conflict within healthcare organizations can also stem from oppressive behavior, lack of resources or opportunities, and the overall structure of the organization. High staff turnover, demanding roles, frequent staff shortages, and high patient demand can create an environment where employees feel undervalued and under-resourced. Without adequate support and opportunities for professional progression, conflicts are likely to arise. Often, conflicts have multiple sources, making conflict management a complex and conscious activity. Identifying the root causes of conflict is essential, and several strategies can be employed to handle conflicts effectively with both colleagues and patients.

**Slide 15:** Managing conflicts with colleagues requires a thoughtful and strategic approach. First and foremost, it is important to act and speak calmly to de-escalate tensions. Implementing positive confrontation techniques can help address issues constructively. Seeking advice from a manager or mediator can provide additional perspectives and facilitate resolution. Choosing a neutral space away from other colleagues, service users, patients, and their families ensures privacy and reduces external pressures. Actively listening and clarifying the issues from both sides fosters mutual understanding. Collaboratively working together to tackle the problem and seeking advice if necessary ensures that solutions are comprehensive and acceptable to all parties involved. Finally, expressing gratitude for the colleague’s willingness to engage in resolving the conflict helps reinforce positive relationships moving forward.

**Slide 16:** Conflicts with patients or their families require a compassionate and patient-centered approach. It is essential to act and speak calmly to maintain a respectful and professional demeanor. Demonstrating patience and understanding is crucial, as patients and their families may need empathy and compassion during stressful times. Actively listening to their concerns and requests helps in fully understanding their perspective. Maintaining a patient-centered approach ensures that their rights and needs are prioritized. Evaluating potential solutions may involve multiple parties and healthcare professionals to find the most effective resolution. Clear communication of information is vital to prevent misunderstandings. Providing additional reading materials can help patients and families become more informed about specific topics, facilitating better decision-making. Ultimately, deciding on a mutually acceptable solution together ensures that all parties feel heard and respected.

**Slide 17:** Now, you’ll watch two videos showing healthcare professionals in conflict situations. Observe both verbal and non-verbal cues, conflict management techniques, and the outcomes. Reflect on what was handled well, what could have been improved, and how different approaches might impact patient care and teamwork.

**Slide 18:** This clip from the Medical Communication Skills Challenge showcases an interprofessional conflict between a doctor and a nurse. Please watch Version 1 of the video here.

**Slide 19:** Here’s a second example that highlights another perspective on conflict. Please watch Version 2 of the video here.

**Slide 20:** In the next section, we’ll explore different styles of handling conflict, focusing on when each style is most effective.

**Slide 21:** The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model offers a robust framework for understanding conflict management. Conflicts can be distressing for individuals and serve as a critical test of managerial skills. People respond to conflicts in diverse ways, and the Thomas-Kilmann model categorizes these responses into five distinct approaches. Developed through observations of individuals' daily interactions, this model highlights how different conflict resolution styles can influence the outcome of a conflict. By examining these styles—competing, avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, and compromising—we can better navigate and manage conflicts in the healthcare environment.

**Slide 22:** The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Model is built on a simple 2×2 grid with an overlapping square at the center, representing the Compromising mode. Along the x-axis is cooperativeness, and along the y-axis is assertiveness. This structure defines four conflict styles: Collaboration (high assertiveness and cooperativeness), Competition (high assertiveness, low cooperativeness), Accommodation (low assertiveness, high cooperativeness), and Avoidance (low assertiveness and cooperativeness). Let’s examine each of these styles in more detail to see how they apply within healthcare.

**Slide 23:** The Thomas-Kilmann model is based on two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperation. Assertiveness refers to the extent to which an individual is willing to take initiative and impose their will on others. This approach is particularly useful in situations requiring quick results, ethical or moral decisions, or when other attempts to resolve conflict have been unsuccessful. However, while assertiveness can lead to faster resolutions and reinforce power structures, it may also cause friction, backlash, and decrease morale among team members.

On the other hand, cooperation involves the willingness to work together to achieve a common goal, emphasising teamwork and considering various perspectives. This strategy is beneficial when there is no clear best way to handle a situation, when collaboration can lower workplace tension, and when fostering a diplomatic and respectful reputation is important. However, cooperation can be time-consuming and may not be effective if the opposing party is particularly stubborn or uncooperative.

**Slide 24:** The competing style is characterised by high assertiveness and low cooperativeness. This approach is employed when quick and decisive action is necessary or when it is crucial to stand firm on a particular issue. While competing may not foster collaboration, it is effective in emergencies or situations where safety and rapid results are paramount. For example, in an emergency department, a senior physician may need to override differing opinions to make immediate decisions to stabilize a patient. Similarly, during a hospital-wide infection outbreak, the chief medical officer might enforce strict quarantine protocols despite resistance to prevent the spread of disease.

**Slide 25:** The avoiding style is marked by low assertiveness and low cooperativeness. It is often used when the conflict is deemed not worth addressing at the moment or when other priorities take precedence. While avoidance can prevent unnecessary tension in the short term, it may leave underlying issues unresolved, causing them to resurface later. In a healthcare setting, for instance, a nurse might choose to avoid addressing a minor scheduling disagreement during a busy shift to maintain focus on patient care. Similarly, a healthcare provider might delay bringing up a non-urgent concern with a colleague during a particularly stressful day, opting to address it when circumstances are calmer.

**Slide 26:** The accommodating style is characterized by low assertiveness and high cooperativeness. It involves yielding to the needs or requests of the other party, often at the expense of one’s own position. This style is effective when maintaining relationships is more important than the conflict's outcome. For example, a junior nurse may agree to follow a senior doctor's instructions despite having reservations to maintain workplace harmony and respect. Similarly, a healthcare provider might agree to work an extra shift for a colleague facing a family emergency, even if it adds to their own workload. Accommodating can help preserve positive relationships and foster a supportive work environment.

**Slide 27:** The collaborating style combines high assertiveness with high cooperativeness. It focuses on finding a win-win solution where both parties’ needs are fully met. Although this approach requires time and effort, it is ideal for achieving long-term solutions that satisfy everyone involved. In a healthcare context, collaboration might occur during a multidisciplinary team meeting where doctors, nurses, and specialists work together to develop a comprehensive treatment plan for a patient with complex needs. Another example is a team from different departments collaborating to create new hospital protocols that balance infection control and patient comfort, ensuring all perspectives are considered and integrated.

**Slide 28:** The compromising style involves moderate assertiveness and cooperation. It seeks a middle ground where each party gives up something to resolve the conflict. Compromising is particularly useful when time is limited, and a quick, mutually acceptable solution is needed. For instance, a doctor and pharmacist might compromise on a patient’s medication plan by adjusting dosages to balance effectiveness with minimizing side effects. Similarly, a healthcare team might agree to schedule a surgery sooner than planned to meet a patient’s urgent needs while still ensuring adequate preparation. Compromising allows for efficient conflict resolution while maintaining a degree of satisfaction for all parties involved.

**Slide 29:** While individuals may favor one conflict resolution style, it often depends on the specific situation and participants involved. The outcome largely hinges on how each party's approach aligns. Effective conflict resolution is essential for strong communication and collaboration. Please proceed with the test to discover your most common conflict resolution style.

**Slide 30:** While conflict can be challenging, it’s also a powerful catalyst for change. By recognizing causes, intensities, and resolution styles, we can turn conflict into a valuable tool for teamwork and improved patient outcomes.

**Slide 31:** Thank you for participating. We hope this module has provided useful strategies for managing conflict effectively in healthcare settings. For further information, please consult the resources provided.