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Patient Perceptions of Discharge

Brook Krininger

Erin Ermels

Angela Fowlkes

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Patient Perceptions of the Discharge Process and After Visit Summary (AVS) at St. Patrick Hospital, Missoula, Montana

Erin Ermels, BSN, RN, CPN; Angela Fowlkes, BSN, RN, DNP student; Brooke Krininger, BSN, RN, MPH, CPAN



Background

- The inpatient units at Providence St. Patrick Hospital (SPH) received lower than desired scores on discharge education
- The Center for Medicaid Services (CMS) imposes financial penalties for higher than average 30-day readmission rates. Thus there is a financial stewardship incentive to maintaining a strong transition of care after an inpatient stay
- Upon discharge, patients are provided a document called an “After Visit Summary” (AVS). The AVS is a compilation of medication lists, care instructions, appointments, and other follow up care.
- Nurses at SPH did not know if the patient experience of discharge met their after-care needs

Purpose

- To explore patient perceptions and satisfaction of the discharge process and after visit summary (AVS).
- The specific study question is: How do patients being discharged from medical-surgical hospitalizations describe their discharge teaching experience?

Methods

- This is a non-interventional, descriptive, qualitative study
- Subjective data regarding hospitalizations, diagnoses, medical history, discharge process, post discharge care/living arrangements, and patients’ experiences, opinions, and perceptions regarding hospital discharge, discharge paperwork, AVS, and home experience was collected from 20 individual, semi-structured interviews
- The transcript data was analyzed through iterative review, note-taking and review of notes by 5 analysts for thematic analysis

Results – Themes

- Medication instructions were clear
- The after-visit summary is a valuable tool
- Discharge from St. Pat’s was an easy process for these interviewees

Results - Patient Quotes

(When discussing what is most helpful on the AVS):
“The phone numbers and names of who to call if I got in trouble.”

(Re: having a family member present at discharge): “Things get a little foggy, so it’s good to have her there to ask questions I don’t think of.” and “I was half out of it at times.”

“The nurse did an excellent job going through it and highlighting the needs to know, which made things easy to find.”

“I look forward to (the AVS) every time because at this age, it’s really important to me to reread things because I don’t remember the way I’d like to.”

Discussion

- Patients reported that the AVS eased the process of discharge for themselves and their caregivers.
- Patients stated the value of the AVS as a reference tool due to factors which interfere with retention of information including:
 - Memory problems, illness state, medication effects, and information overload
- Interviewees identified these sections as particularly helpful:
 - Medications list
 - Diet instructions
 - Follow up appointment schedule
 - Clinic contact information
 - What symptoms to watch for and when to call the doctor
- Due to the strict criteria for eligibility, the population surveyed may have been skewed favorably towards subjects who were more likely to have good post discharge outcomes.

Nursing Implications:

- Based on this study, nurses can have confidence that the AVS is working well for the surveyed population.
- Further study ideas: Explore perceptions about AVS of patients who are readmitted within 30 days of the discharge process

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