

OUTPATIENT DISCHARGE COMMUNICATION

Rapid Improvement Resource

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring patients feel confident in their next steps following discharge or a visit is vitally important in continuity of care and outcomes. Many times, despite our best intentions, there is a disconnect between the communication and actions we put in place to provide discharge/post visit clarity, and we miss the mark in the eyes of our patients. Discharge Communication is often a key driver of outpatient experiences and is measured by PRC using the following item, using the Excellent to Poor scale:

How would you rate the instructions given to you upon discharge?

While 100% of patients tend to receive discharge instructions, patients may still experience confusion, frustration, or lack of understanding about what to do next.

WHY DOES DISCHARGE COMMUNICATION MATTER?

Discharge and Post-visit Communication matter because we want to ensure patients are prepared to follow through on their care plan and we want to avoid unnecessary delays in treatment, lab work, referrals, and/or medication adherence. Actively preparing patients (and their caregivers) to follow the plan or execute next steps for themselves once discharged is an important responsibility. Failure to prepare the patient can result in poor outcomes, poor compliance, increased length of stay or repeat readmissions. Tools to improve communication are encouraged. We also need to look at our perceptions of discharge vs. the patient's perceptions of discharge. Engaging staff, physicians, and providers on the discharge instructions measure and plan is a great way to put discharge into perspective and position post-visit continuity as a standard component of an excellent patient experience.

COMMUNICATION TO SET EXPECTATIONS

Sample Questions to Validate Discharge Communication:

- Tell me the most important things you are going to do to follow up from your visit/appointment/care today.
- What questions do you have about your discharge instructions?
- Show me how you plan to change your dressing.
- What do you feel most prepared to do following discharge?
- What concerns do you have about next steps?



During Patient Service Excellence Rounding or Discharge Phone Calls:

- Tell me about your plan of care.
- How are we keeping you informed about your post-visit follow up steps?
- Let's discuss any fears or concerns you may have about next steps after you are discharged.

HIGH IMPACT SERVICE STANDARDS

1. Teach the patient during their visit what to expect in the next step of their care.
2. Begin educating the patient and his/her caregivers on the patient's illness and plan of care as far upstream as possible to set expectations early and often.
3. Take the perspective of the patient. What are their emotional, clinical, and safety needs? That allows you to anticipate their needs and plan accordingly.
4. Encourage the patient to ask questions.
5. Provide the patient with the name and telephone number of a person who can answer questions after they get home.
6. Consider making post-visit calls within 24-48 hours of the patient's appointment.

TARGET YOU INQUIRY

Reviewing your patient experience results in PRCEasyView can provide powerful insight:

- Review data by patient demographics to assess trends.
- Look at patient comments among those who rate you Excellent.
- Look for trends in patient comments among those who rate you below Excellent.

Connecting with your patients and asking open-ended questions can gain valuable insight:

- Tell me about your post-visit experiences. What went well? What challenges did you face?
- What could we have done to better prepare you for post-visit care at home?
- What would an excellent discharge experience look like to you?
- What felt confusing about your care?
- On a scale of 1-5 with 5 being Excellent, how would you rate the instructions given to you upon discharge?
 - If Excellent - What made it excellent? What could we do to absolutely wow you?
 - If Below Excellent - What are two things we could do better with? What would wow you?

Our goal is to support and equip you with resources to make a meaningful improvement in discharge performance.

