



FoNS Improvement Insights

Managing Medicines on Discharge for Older Patients

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Duration of project: November 2011 – February 2012

Keywords: Older people, discharge, medication management, prescription charts

Project background

This project was initiated as a result of feedback from a relative following discharge from an acute independent hospital in central London. The relative's concerns centred on the discharge processes in relation to medication to take out. Evidence demonstrates that medication management for older people can be problematic, especially if polypharmacy is involved. The Care Quality Commission (2009, p 18) identified a number of discrepancies which arise in communication about medications between hospitals and GPs following patient discharge including: 'the omission of medications, failing to provide a rationale for why a medication had been changed and the absence of a follow up plan'.

Aim and objectives of the project

The aim of the project was to improve the management of medicines for older people on discharge from hospital. The main focus of the project was to redesign a 'To Take Out' (TTO) prescription chart based upon a service user suggestion and was led by the project leader in collaboration with the hospital nurse-led medication committee. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were identified. To:

- Engage with members of the medication committee and patients
- Engage with community stakeholders to understand their issues
- Redesign and implement a new 'To Take Out' medication chart
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the redesigned chart

Key activities and outcomes of the project

Methods and approaches used within the project were informal staff dialogue and reflection, staff awareness raising through education events and feedback from staff regarding the newly designed To Take Out (TTO) medication chart.

- Informal staff dialogue and reflection
After discussions between the project leader and colleagues, it was agreed that service delivery of medication management for older patients could be improved. The key issues to consider related to:
 - a. Raising awareness with nursing staff about the confusion that polypharmacy can create for patients

- b. Addressing time management issues to ensure that patients can receive a detailed and timely explanation of medication management before discharge
 - c. Considering the ways in which other healthcare professionals can help e.g. pharmacy staff
 - d. Considering the approaches that can be used to enable medicines management for patients
- Developing the new TTO medication chart
Building on the learning to date, a new TTO medication chart was drafted by a doctor from the medication committee with the help of the project leader and this was informed by ongoing discussion with the committee.
 - Supporting the implementation of the TTO chart
It was acknowledged that the nursing staff would require support in using the new TTO chart. The project leader and a ward manager jointly organised small informal teaching groups in the staff restaurant. In total the sessions were held three times a day for five days. These included 8.00am meetings, in order to include the night staff. The new TTO medication charts are now being trialled on the wards.
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of the redesigned TTO chart
In order to evaluate the newly designed TTO chart, it will be important to obtain patient feedback. To achieve this, questions pertaining to the chart will be incorporated in the questionnaire that is currently being used to follow up patients by telephone after discharge by the Patient Liaison Sister. A sample of patients who used the new TTO chart will be identified and their responses to the questions will be critically analysed by the project leader. This information will be used to further inform the development of the TTO chart. This data will be presented at the medication and audit committee.

Implications for practice:

- Feedback from a patient or carer can be used to initiate a project to improve practice and/or care
- Collaborating with patients and carers can be a rewarding experience for staff leading change initiatives
- Project leaders will need courage, enthusiasm and good support systems to overcome the challenges of time and IT issues when leading projects of this kind

A full project report including references can be accessed from: <http://fons.org/library/report-details.aspx?nstdid=41447>

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