A Quality Improvement Project to Test the Effectiveness of a Patient-Centered Pathway and Discharge Tool on Heart Failure Patient Engagement

Purpose

The purpose of this quality improvement project was to evaluate the effectiveness of two tools designed to enhance heart failure patients' engagement in their care. The tools were developed for this project based upon lean principles and were intended to provide the patients a graphical representation of what to expect during their hospitalization, their transition home and improve their ongoing symptom management.

Methodology

A pre/post test design was utilized to evaluate effectiveness of quality improvement initiative over two eight week periods. The population sample consisted of Heart Failure patients admitted to three telemetry units at a suburban community hospital by hospitalist group physicians. Pre-implementation (n=52); post-implementation (n=58). In order to evaluate the impact on patient engagement the following data was collected: patient satisfaction scores for "Communication with Nurses", "Communication with Doctors", "Discharge Information" and "Care Transitions" as well as average length of stay.

Results

Patient satisfaction score improved in three out of the four domains while length-of- stay was reduced by 0.4 days per patient. The reduction in length of stay represents a potential cost savings of $23,000 over the eight week time period.

Implications for Practice

Utilization of graphical images with patient-centered communication tools may improve patient engagement and disease management. The results of this pilot project indicate these tools enhanced translation of healthcare information into a format that is easy for patients to understand and follow. Future analysis should focus on the sustainability of the performance improvement, the impact on readmission rates and whether the tools can be modified to improve the outcomes of other patient populations.

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