

Use of Written Handouts to Facilitate Inpatient Medication Counseling and Improve HCAHPS Scores

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Background: Patient satisfaction is influenced by many factors, including understanding new medications. One tool used to assess patient satisfaction are the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys, which are distributed to patients after hospital discharge. Part of this survey also assesses medication counseling. A previous study demonstrated increased HCAHPS scores when patients were provided with handouts on side effects and encouraged to ask questions. However, there is limited information about the use of more comprehensive written medication education materials to improve patient satisfaction.

Methodology: The project's sample consisted of nurses and patients in the telemetry unit of a single community hospital. Handouts for heart failure and myocardial infarction were made to encourage nurses to counsel patients on new medications. Then, a pre- and post- survey were created for nurses to take before and after use of the handouts. The surveys' goal was to assess nurses' perceptions regarding inpatient medication counseling and the usefulness of the disease-specific handouts. The project also aimed to enhance patient counseling on the core medications for heart failure and myocardial infarction. HCAHPS scores from patient satisfaction surveys sent to patients after hospital discharge were also assessed. The primary outcome assessed for the study was nurses' opinions on medication counseling and use of written handouts, as assessed through a pre- and post-survey. The secondary outcome was increased patient satisfaction, as determined through HCAHPS survey results.

Results: 25 nurses answered the pre-survey and 19 nurses answered the post-survey. When counseling on indication, 72% of nurses surveyed reported counseling all of the time or frequently before the handouts were implemented and 63% after handouts were available. Rates of side effect counseling were similar before and after handout availability. On average, handouts received a 7.4 for helpfulness with assisting with counseling and a 7.8 for perceived effectiveness for patients on a scale of 1-10, with one being the worst and 10 being the best. Overall, HCAHPS scores for patient satisfaction regarding communication about medications were modestly reduced when comparing 2019 to 2020 (57.2% versus 47.1%).

Conclusion: The project provided a new way to enhance patient and nursing understanding of medications used for common cardiac disease states. The findings are relevant because they provided insight into nursing perceptions regarding medication counseling and improved counseling strategies. Future, larger studies are needed to further determine if disease state-specific handouts including medication indications and side effects are able to increase the effectiveness of medication counseling and improve patient satisfaction.

Keywords: nursing perceptions; medication counseling; patient satisfaction; survey; handouts; HCAHPS scores