



Discharge

Speed of discharge process after you were told you could go home

QUESTION DEFINITION

This question measures the patient's perceptions of how long it took to get out of the hospital after the physician told the patient that they were going home. Once the physician makes the announcement, a clock starts in the patient's mind. The efficiency of the process will be reflected in the patient's perceptions.

IMPROVEMENT SOLUTIONS

- Inform the patient of everything that is being done for them to arrange for home care equipment as it is being done. Keep them frequently updated on the progress of these arrangements.
- Tell the patient when they can expect to go home; tell the patient what must happen between now and when they are discharged.
- Solicit any other remaining concerns. Ask if any questions or issues remain unanswered. Address whatever the patient brings up. Provide a pen and notepad titled "Questions to ask before I go home."
- Communicate to the patient the steps in the discharge process.
- Provide updates. Let the patient know what is accomplished and what remains to be done.
- Let the patient know an estimated time needed to complete the discharge.
- Inform the patient of delays in the execution of the process.
- Inform the patient of his/her responsibilities in facilitating the discharge (e.g., babies can't go home unless placed in an approved car seat).
- Redesign the process to make it as patient-centered as possible. Minimize the number of actions required by the patient or family.
- Coordinate tests so patient is not waiting for test results to come back before they can be discharged.
- Does the medication schedule resonate with the physicians discharge time/information (doctor tells patient he/she can go home, but nurse has instructions to give meds in two hours). Reconcile any conflicts and inform the patient of what you are doing and why.
- Have prescriptions available or sent to pharmacy so patient isn't waiting for them.
- Make sure the training schedule is followed, so patient is not waiting for an educational session regarding post-discharge care.
- Make certain transporters or wheelchairs are available at estimated discharge time.
- If the patient has a lot of stuff (plants, books, etc), make certain a cart is available to help transport the stuff out with the patient.



- Provide a specific discharge time so family or friends are available to escort the patient home and the patient doesn't have to wait in the facility after the process is complete because no ride is available.
- Schedule discharge times and hold everyone accountable for meeting them. Match the discharge times with the schedule of anticipated admission to ensure optimal patient flow.
- Never "park" a patient in a hallway, lobby, etc.
- Proactively coordinate with nursing homes, assisted living, rehab and other facilities where the patient may be discharged. Make certain that they are expecting and prepared for the patient.
- Using days, hours and minutes, measure the inpatient discharge time and length of stay. Use QI techniques to improve. Hold everyone involved in the process accountable--even across departments.
- Be certain that a discharge plan has been prepared, is understood by both the discharging nurse as well as the patient, and has been confirmed with the physician before discussing discharge with the patient.
- When informing the patient that he or she is being discharged, give an estimate of how long it will take to complete the discharge process.
- Create a discharge checklist with all of the necessary items that need to be taken care of before the patient can be sent home. Review the checklist with the patient. When delays occur, this can be a tool to explain the reason behind the delays.
- Have case managers round on patient rooms on a daily basis and update the patients on their discharge needs.
- Establish a time for the patient to be discharged and explain all of the steps that need to be completed before discharge can happen. Give updates periodically, especially if there are any delays.
- Have a system for identifying which patients are "discharge ready". One suggestion is to place a sticker indicating this on the outside of the patient's medical record so that clinical staff is aware they are ready to go home. Be sure to inform the patient and family members before doing so.
- Keep track of all patients discharged within thirty minutes of the discharge appointment time. Celebrate with units that obtain a preset goal.
- Use a whiteboard to help the patient and their family with the discharge process. The items on the board could include the expected time the patient can go home, the time the family should arrive, and the time the discharge documentation is completed.
- Have a laminated copy of the discharge expectations and place them in all rooms for the patient and family to view at any time.
- Include the discharge process in your admission packets and have it mentioned during the patient admission process, along with other hospital processes.