What Matters Most to Patients and Caregivers during Care Transitions

Key Findings
Patients and family caregivers say that clear accountability, care continuity, and caring attitudes are what they need and want when leaving the hospital.

What do patients & family caregivers want?
We talked with over 200 patients and family caregivers from across the U.S. about what they want when leaving the hospital. They said:

(1) To feel clear accountability
Patients and family caregivers want to know who is responsible for their care and who to contact if problems arise.

“It’s like being thrown out in the middle of a lake and ... [you’re] searching for somebody on the other side of the lake to help you.” –Caregiver

(2) To feel prepared and capable
 Patients and family caregivers want to know what to expect when they leave the hospital and to be prepared for potential issues. They want to be given tools for self-care and shown what to do.

“They had set up the doctor’s appointments ... had filled the prescriptions...they explained it line by line ... that all helped.” –Patient

(3) To feel cared for and cared about
Patients and family caregivers want to know their medical providers care about them as individuals.

“If it weren’t for family at my hospital, you would not be cared for... when you call for [nursing staff], they may or may not come.” –Patient

What can patients do?
Patients can encourage health care providers to meet their needs by doing the following:

• Write down questions and bring them to appointments.
• Bring a caregiver when possible.
• Don’t feel shy about asking questions if you:
  o don’t understand,
  o need written instructions,
  o need to know who to contact and when.

How can providers help?
Health care providers can perform 5 behaviors to make sure these 3 outcomes happen.

1) Engage patients and family caregivers in discharge planning;
2) Provide timely information about the patient’s diagnosis and treatment;
3) Use caring language and gestures that communicate compassion;
4) Anticipate patients’ needs to support self-care at home;
5) Provide uninterrupted care with minimal handoffs between providers.

What is Project ACHIEVE?
Project ACHIEVE aims to 1) Rigorously evaluate care transition strategies, and 2) Understand what matters most to patients and caregivers during care transitions. These results are one component of this 5-year, $15 million study funded by the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).


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