

Short Communication

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Evaluating Patient Satisfaction of Nurse Practitioner Care in the Hospital Setting: A Qualitative Pilot Study

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Abstract

Aim: The purpose of this study is to develop a tool and assess patient satisfaction with inpatient Nurse Practitioner (NP) care.

Design: A 10 item questionnaire was administered to hospital inpatients cared for directly by one of two NP's.

Methods: Patients were given a point of care tablet to answer the survey questions with yes or no. The primary outcomes measured were satisfaction with the hospital NP in quality of care, effective communication, and discharge planning.

Results: A total of 19 patients participated in this study. 100% of patients felt that nurse practitioners communicated the plan of care effectively, clearly communicated medication information, answered all questions effectively, and knew what to expect when they went home. Between 80-89.5% of patients understood their discharge goals, what they may need after discharge, and understood what signs and symptoms to look for after discharge. Only 36% reported that they had a primary care provider appointment upon discharge.

Conclusions: Results of the questionnaire showed a high level of satisfaction with NP care and identified specific discharge barriers among these hospitalized patients. Determining patient satisfaction with NP care can help direct important performance and improvement activities for healthcare institutions.

Keywords: Nurse practitioner, Patient satisfaction, Hospital

Abbreviations: NP: Nurse Practitioner; CMS: Medicare and Medicaid Services; HCAHPS: Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems

Background

In the setting of the physician shortage and continued demand for hospital care, Nurse Practitioners (NP) are valuable members of an inpatient provider team. In a 2012 survey of hospitalists, more than half of the groups utilized NP in their care models [1,2]. NP perform a myriad of clinical and management responsibilities within the hospital setting. Although NP contribution to patient outcomes is well noted in a variety of settings [3-6], there

is limited data regarding patient satisfaction related to care by NP in the hospital setting. Although currently the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services currently only survey patients about physician care in the hospital, as NP are frequently a part of the care team, their care will also influence patients' perceptions. All team members' goals should be to deliver patient centered care; feedback on achieving this goal is critical.

Patient satisfaction with care provided by NP has been evaluated in settings similar to hospital-based setting. NPs were found to improve patient satisfaction in the Emergency and Critical Care settings [3]. A systematic review of NP in the Emergency Department showed positive impact of NP care on patient satisfaction [4]. A literature review performed by the authors conducted using electronic databases PubMed, CINAHL, MEDLINE (OVID), and Cochrane Library failed to identify any articles that specifically addressed patient satisfaction with hospital-based NP.

There are several assessment tools to evaluate outcomes for patient care by NP in the primary care setting [7-10] and Emergency Department setting [9]. Within the hospital, patient satisfaction is assessed by the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) which administers a 27-question survey to discharged patients that examines patient's hospital experience. The survey evaluates communication with physicians and nurses, pain management, environment of the hospital, communication regarding medications, discharge instructions, overall hospital grade, and if patients would recommend the facility to others [2]. The HCAHPS survey, unfortunately, does not evaluate NPs specifically. This presents a quality evaluation shortfall as many patients are cared by NP within the hospital.

Patient satisfaction surveys are an invaluable tool in improving patient experience and operational performance. At the present time, NPs and their institutions are not receiving this invaluable feedback in order to improve patient care. The aim of this pilot study was to develop a tool and evaluate patient satisfaction with NP care within the hospital setting to provide feedback in order to improve patient centered care.

Design

This pilot study was a quality improvement project designed to evaluate patient satisfaction with inpatient NP care. Patients on the Hospital Internal Medicine team in a tertiary care teaching hospital under the care of one of two designated between October and December 2018 were identified and asked to participate in this study. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board.

Methods

The institution utilizes the outside organization, Press Ganey, to collect and analyze patient satisfaction surveys. After informed consent was obtained, patients who

agreed to participate were provided a hospital owned iPad to complete a 10-item questionnaire developed with Press Ganey representatives (Table 1). The questions were designed to comply with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) requirements to not duplicate HCAHPS questions, yet still give valuable feedback to the NP. Patients were excluded if they were on contact isolation or had altered mental status. The primary outcomes measured were satisfaction with the hospital nurse practitioner in quality care, effective communication, and discharge planning. Data collected from the questionnaires was electronically transmitted to Press Ganey immediately to maintain anonymity. Questionnaire data was then obtained from Press Ganey for evaluation at the end of the three-month study period. Each of the 19 patients answered all 10-items of the questionnaire. Percentages were calculated based on a YES response.

Results

Seventy patients were asked to participate in the study and 19 patients consented to participate. All participants were asked the same 10 questions (Table 1). One hundred percent of the 19 surveyed patients felt that the NPs communicated effectively, took the time to properly explain things, answered all of their questions, communicated medication information clearly and knew why new medicines were ordered (questions 1-5). The majority (89.5%) indicated that the NP had discussed what to expect after discharge home, talked about help needed after discharge (89.5%), understood the plan of care and discharge goals (89.5%) and were given instructions on what signs and symptoms to look for after discharge (80%). However, only 36.8% reported that they had an appointment scheduled with their primary care physician after discharge. Results were similar between the two NPs (Table 1).

Discussion

Although NPs hold a pivotal role in management of care of hospitalized patients, there is very little evidence or research available regarding patient satisfaction with hospital-based NP care. Satisfaction surveys are an invaluable tool used to improve patient experience and operational performance. Results from the survey revealed patients cared for by a hospitalist NPs believed that the NP communicated effectively, provided detailed instructions on medications, and answered questions thoroughly. This enabled valuable feedback to these NP providers. However, there were deficiencies identified

Table 1: Positive results (%)

Survey Question	APRN 1	APRN 2	Combined
Are your nurse practitioners communicating effectively so that you are able to understand?	11 (100)	8 (100)	19 (100)
Did you feel the nurse practitioner took the time to properly explain things to you?	11 (100)	8 (100)	19 (100)
Do you feel your nurse practitioner answered all of your questions?	11 (100)	8 (100)	19 (100)
Has your nurse practitioner communicated medication information with you clearly?	11 (100)	8 (100)	19 (100)
Do you know why the nurse practitioner ordered new medicine?	11 (100)	8 (100)	19 (100)
Has your nurse practitioner discussed with you what to expect when you go home?	10 (90.9)	8 (100)	18 (94.7)
Do you have an appointment set with your primary provider?	4 (36.4)	3 (37.5)	7 (36.8)
Has staff talked to you about help you may need after discharge?	11 (100)	6 (75)	17 (89.5)
Do you understand your plan of care and discharge goals?	11 (100)	6 (75)	17 (89.5)
Did we give you instructions on what signs and symptoms to look for after discharge?	9 (81.8)	6 (75)	15 (80)

in discharge planning, including understanding the plan of care, discharge goals, and what to look for after discharge. Furthermore, only one-third of the patients had a follow up appointment scheduled upon discharge. This insufficiency demonstrates a significant barrier to post hospitalization follow up which can negatively impact hospital readmission rates. Surveys such as these that can measure satisfaction and care gaps for every team member can highlight areas for quality improvement.

The knowledge gained from this project is valuable to NPs for multiple reasons. Assessing patient satisfaction of NPs in the hospital setting is critical for continuous improvement in patient care, particularly as many payor models are moving towards reimbursement based on patient satisfaction and patient outcomes. Each questionnaire assists NPs with identification of care deficits and potential areas of improvement. Previously, there has not been a tool devised to assess patient satisfaction with NPs in the hospital setting. This led to the creation of a survey which can be utilized by other NPs to assess patient satisfaction and ultimately will help improve patient satisfaction and potentially improve patient outcomes.

The study had limitations. Although approximately 70 patients were invited to enroll in the study, most patients preferred to refrain from enrollment, which led to a small sample size. Future projects should focus on increasing sample size to make results generalizable. The validity of the questionnaire used in this study has not been established, however, the straight forward yes/no questions were easy to interpret for both the patients and

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the institution. Validation of the tool would strengthen the results.

Conclusion

Results of the questionnaire showed a high level of satisfaction with NP care and identified specific discharge barriers among these hospitalized patients. Determining patient satisfaction with NP care can help direct important performance and improvement activities for healthcare institutions.

Acknowledgement

Impact

Patient satisfaction with inpatient care is an important metric to understand performance and direct quality improvement activities. Our study shows that it is possible to design and implement tools to receive this important information from patients.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest has been declared by the authors.

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