Discharge Instructions - Who, What, When and Where: The Development of a Discharge Liaison Role to Improve the Patient Experience and Discharge Planning Process Post-operatively

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Introduction: Ambulatory Surgery Patient Experience Scores related to post-operative discharge instructions for FY19 were at the 38th percentile, well below the institutional goal of the 50th percentile.

Identification of the problem: Team dissatisfaction with the inconsistency and unavailability of discharge instructions post-operatively along with low patient experience scores related to discharge instructions led to the development of a dedicated position and process to coordinate communication with the surgeon and parents post-operatively prior to discharge.

QI question/Purpose of the study: The goal of the project was to improve the discharge process and communication of discharge instructions with parents/caregivers resulting in improved patient experience scores, improved team member and surgeon satisfaction and decreased discharge delays.

Methods: After development of a Process Improvement (PI) Team, the Discharge Liaison Role and responsibilities were established. The Pilot was presented to the peri-operative teams and surgeons, and a time frame was identified. An initial survey was sent to the surgeons to gauge their satisfaction with the current discharge process.

Outcomes/Results: By developing and implementing a dedicated Discharge Liaison Role we improved our patient experience scores specific to the question “instructions nurses gave you about caring for your child at home” from the 38th percentile in FY19 to the 90th percentile in FY20.

Discussion: Implementing the Discharge Liaison Role allowed for consistent and thorough post-operative discharge instructions and provided the opportunity for clarification and coordination of any prescriptions or equipment that may be needed.

Conclusion: By developing the Discharge Liaison Role our patients, the team, and the surgeons responded positively, and we realized a significant improvement in our Patient Experience Scores.

Implications for perianesthesia nurses and future research: The development of a dedicated Discharge Liaison was essential to the improvement of our patient experience scores and the coordination of timely discharge planning for our post-operative patients. Future research is needed to evaluate the impact on readmission rates, post-operative complications and decreased discharge delays.