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Abstract

DISCHARGE PLANNING PROCESS - INFORMATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN REGISTERED NURSES AND DISTRICT NURSES

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Oral Presentation

Summary and Keywords:

A web-based census survey with 194 registered nurses (129 respondents) 67 district nurses (42 respondents) shows that there are significant differences in perceived information exchange between registered nurses and district nurses, during the discharge planning process. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and a chi-squared test. *Keywords: nurses, qualitative research*

Abstract

Objectives: Discharge planning is an important care process for managing the patient's transition from hospital care to primary healthcare and/or community care or services. It has been studied for more than 20 years, although few studies clarify the information exchanged between healthcare providers. The study aimed to describe district and registered nurses' experiences with and perceptions of the information exchange during the discharge planning process. The focus was on what, when and how information is exchanged between the hospital and primary healthcare.

Method: For data collection, a web-based census survey was used and the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and a chi-squared test. A questionnaire was distributed to 194 registered nurses (129 respondents) from a central county hospital and 67 district nurses (42 respondents) working in 13 primary healthcare centres, all situated in northern Sweden. At the end of the questionnaire, a free-text section allowed the participants to provide detailed responses about their experiences and perceptions with regard to the information exchange process. That data was analyzed using qualitative text analysis.

Results: The results show a significant difference in perceptions of the information given and received by the two groups during the discharge planning process. The discrepancies differ throughout the process for the 21 items of patient-related information that were asked about. The differences are most significant at the patient's admission and become less significant at the discharge planning conference. Differences in perception are negligible at discharge. The patient-related information shared during the process, was transferred electronically between the hospital and primary healthcare, using the uniform medical-record system or uniform information system, on paper (hard copy) or verbally. Discrepancies between perceived information given and received were highest for information transferred electronically, compared with information transmitted via paper and verbally. There was a significant difference between the information perceived as given and received electronically for 17 items, only one item for information transferred verbally and no significant difference for information transferred on paper. Both groups thought the electronic information system had too many steps and was complicated and difficult to use. In turn, this resulted in poor documentation and delays. They thought verbal information exchange worked best, especially when all participants met at the discharge planning conference.

Conclusion: This study shows difficulties for registered and district nurses knowing what, when and how patient-related information needs to be given when not receiving the expected information. There is also a need for education and training in the electronic systems used for information exchange. Better user-friendly systems are necessary. These results can be used to develop knowledge about roles, work tasks and needs to enhance the outcome of the discharge planning process and the information exchange. This will contribute to securing the patient's transition between hospital and home.