

Improving Communication and Ensuring Safe Patient Care Through Accurate and Prompt Electronic Discharge Letters

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Conclusion/Outcomes

- The electronic discharge template has been redesigned to be less repetitive, more logical and user friendly.
- Doctors have been educated on how to complete discharge letters from an IT, clinical and Trust finance perspective
- Discharges are being commenced in real time by the patient's own team and updated regularly
- It is now possible to access electronic discharges started by other doctors on any ward

With Benefits For...

- Patient:** Safety and Continuity of Primary and Secondary Care
Junior Doctor: Improved Efficiency and Accuracy
 Removing Pressure/Stress
GP: Provided with Correct, Trustworthy Information



Dr Caroline Biddle and Dr Eleanor Rudge with Dr Sanjay Arya (Foundation Programme Director), Mr Phil Harris (Surgical Director), Dr Umesh Prabhu (Medical Director) and Sir Nayyar Naqvi, receiving the Naqvi Prize for Best Clinical Audit, 2010

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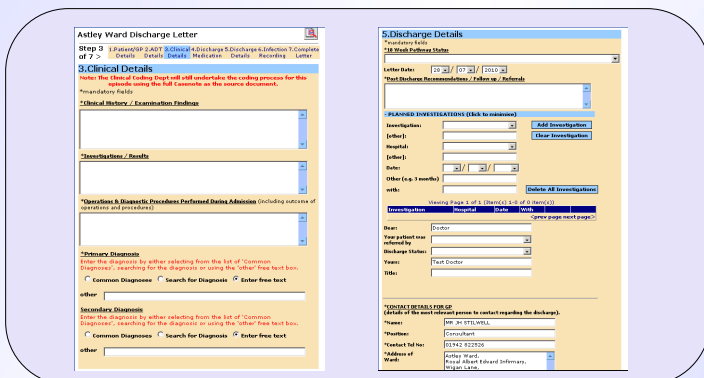
Background

Is your Trust meeting the NHS contract requirement to get accurate discharge letters to GPs within 24 hours?

Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust has 758 beds, resulting in a large number of discharge letters being completed each year. A prompt and accurate discharge letter improves communication between primary and secondary care, leading to safer patient management. Complaints were made, from both patients and doctors, regarding inaccurate and delayed discharge letters hindering patient treatment and sometimes even leading to harm. The Department of Health has recently issued a target for discharge letters to be sent to GPs within 24 hours of patient discharge and, therefore, we performed a clinical audit to determine if our Trust was providing prompt and accurate discharge letters.

Objectives

- To assess the accuracy of patient discharge letters and bring about change
- To educate doctors about the importance and relevance of accurate discharge summaries and the impact that doctors can have on patient care, clinical coding and Trust finance



Method

- Retrospective audit, with 60 random case notes over a 6 month period

Results

- 73% of doctors completing discharges were FY1s
- 27% discharges done by doctors not involved in patient's management
- GPs not informed of changes in medications in 22% of cases and no follow up plans for GPs in 22% of cases
- 42% of discharges did not have information on procedures carried out

Lessons Learnt

- Audit need not simply be a tedious tick-box exercise; instead it can be a meaningful opportunity, teaching skills that can be used throughout an entire career
- Simple changes can have far reaching benefits for both patients and healthcare staff, something that we hope to prove with the results of our re-audit
- Being that bridge between primary care physicians and secondary care consultants is not only extremely rewarding, but it has also improved our insight into the running of a hospital and the nature of the process required for change within it
- We have realised that anyone, no matter how junior, can make a difference – so don't let your status curb your desire and ability to implement positive change...get involved, and make things happen...