Improving Transitions to Skilled Nursing Facilities

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BACKGROUND:
Transitioning to a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) can be a stressful and often unplanned experience for patients and their families. Research indicates that patients report feeling rushed, underprepared and that the quality of the facility is rarely a deciding factor when choosing a SNF.¹

PURPOSE:
At Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital (SRH), Case Managers (CMs) did not have a common procedure for providing education to patients/families about the SNF selection process. The goal of this process improvement study was to standardize and optimize the patient education provided by CMs about SNF quality measures to help patients/families best prepare for this transition.

METHODS:
Design: 8 CMs participated in semi-structured interviews pre and post interventions (see below)
Location: SRH, Boston, MA (Inpatient Rehabilitation Facility)
Data Collection:
CMs were asked to describe the educational materials they provide to patients/families about the SNF selection process including:
• Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Five-Star Quality Rating System and CMS Quality Measures²
• Partners SNF Collaborative³
• Online resources (CMS SNF Compare⁴ and Nursing Home Survey Performance Tool⁵)
• The use of written education

INTERVENTIONS:
Education to CMs about Quality Measures:
An in-service was provided on:
• Algorithms for CMS Five-Star Quality Rating System for health inspections, staffing, and quality of care measures
• Online resources including a demonstration of websites
• Partners SNF Collaborative application process, eligibility criteria and contributing quality measures

Development of SNF Patient Education Tool:
A written patient education tool defining:
• Care at a skilled nursing facility
• How to prepare for the transition to SNF
• Explanation of CMS Five-Star Quality Rating System and Quality Measures
• Partners SNF Collaborative
• Online resources and websites
• List of questions to ask when touring a SNF

Implementation of SNF Patient Education Tool:
CMs were provided an introduction to the SNF Patient Education Tool during the in-service. They were asked to trial the tool for one month with patients who were preparing to transition to SNF. Feedback was obtained from CMs after the trial period and the document was modified accordingly.

RESULTS:
Percentage of CMs Providing Educational Materials to Patients/Families

PATIENT/FAMILY COMMENTS:
“It was great to have something in writing to help us prepare for moving our mother to a SNF.”
“I never looked at facilities before and it helped me ask the right questions, like the amount of therapy and nursing ratios.”
“It was nice to know that Partners has researched good quality SNFs (Partners SNF Collaborative) to make our decision easier.”

STAFF COMMENTS:
“It is exactly what caregivers wanted to help them navigate the SNF search process.”
“It is user friendly!”
“It is nice that it is short and to the point and families can pull questions from the list to address their concerns.”

SUSTAINABILITY:
• Webinar of CM in-service available online
• Training on SNF Patient Education Tool
• Partners SNF Collaborative application added to new CM employee orientation
• The use of written education
• CM Education Committee will review the Education Tool annually and assess the need for updates and staff training

DISCUSSION:
Prior to the intervention, the CM team had a variable approach to providing information to patients/families about the SNF transition process. The interventions, including education to CMs and implementation of the SNF Patient Education Tool, were highly effective in improving the consistency of education provided on quality measures to patients/families. CMs reported that patients/families were receptive to the written education and felt better prepared to transition to SNF (see Comments sections).

REFERENCES