

Improving Medication Communication with Ask 3/Teach 3

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Problem

A patient's understanding of his or her medications is vital to a satisfactory patient experience and it also drives safety and quality. Recent study: Only 35% of patients knew the side effects of their medication (Hays, Ron D., et al. "Physician Communication When Prescribing New Medications.") Archives of Internal Medicine 166, no. 17 (2006): 1855-62.

Outcomes:

By implementing the Ask 3 / Teach 3 initiative, Cleveland Clinic Health System has seen a significant rise in the HCAHPS medication communication scores. Moving our scores from 1Q2011 60% Top Box to 1Q2013 64% Top box.

At Cleveland Clinic Health System, several unit-based teams were already working to improve performance on the medication HCAHPS questions, but attempts were isolated and not coordinated well enough to share best practices throughout the organization.

Solution

A multidisciplinary improvement team of nursing, pharmacy, operations and patient experience was formed in January 2011 to solve this issue. The team completed surveys of physicians and nurses and assessed current practice around how we communicate to patients about medications. Based on the review, the team believed there was a solution that could be designed that improved caregiver performance and leveraged the role patients could play. They believed patients could be made better partners in the communication process by engaging them in the conversation. By scripting the interaction and incorporating available medication leaflets and "teach back," we believed that medication communication could be improved.

The Ask 3/Teach 3 program is designed to encourage patients and caregivers to become engaged in the medication communication process as "partners." The questions that patients and families are coached to ask compliment the points that caregivers are designed to teach. Patients and their family or home care partners are advised and encouraged to "Ask 3" questions for each medication that is offered to them: 1) What is the name of that medication? 2) Why do I need to take it? 3) What are the possible side effects of that medication? These three questions are printed in their admission folder, and it is everyone's responsibility to encourage and support patients to follow this process.

The "Teach 3" component sharpens communication around the delivery of the medication and encourages caregivers to become more engaged in the medication communication process by utilizing the same scripting. The three statements that align with the patient questions are: 1) This medication is [insert medication name] 2) This medication was prescribed for [insert medication reason] 3) The potential side effects of this medication are [insert side effects]. This complimentary process is designed to align the communication between the caregiver delivering the medication and the patient who receives it.

The concept is designed to reinforce the critical components that each patient should understand about their medications. It is emphasized to all caregivers to use the words "side effects" within the conversation. We believe that inserting "side effects" into the conversation is critical for patients and their families to better monitor for adverse complications of medication delivery. The pharmacy director at each hospital was a critical leader for this initiative. Pharmacy worked very closely with nursing to ensure the initiative gained traction.

Contact

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