Problem
In order to address the Communication about Medications domain of the HCAHPS survey and better meet the patient’s needs, Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital (SBCH) implemented the use of Teach Back, an evidence-based practice for patient education. Initially, the program started in the Cardiac Telemetry (CT) unit then was implemented throughout all Medical-Surgical departments then used hospital-wide. With the HCAHPS change and introduction of new questions, a new approach and change in focus was needed. Informal surveys of our patients corroborated our unit HCAHPS data of an 11th percentile rank (56% top box) for the Medications domain. For patient safety, our patients needed to know about their new medications and side effects.

Solution
With an idea and a goal in mind, the CT staff worked to create a program that would guarantee consistent and effective communication of new medications and side effects to all of our patients. Resources were allocated to develop a package that could be piloted to determine efficacy, and tools were created to ensure effective and consistent delivery of medication education. One goal was to assure 100% of nursing staff was educated on the Teach Back program, with our ultimate goal of assuring our patients were knowledgeable about their new medications and 2 to 3 side effects associated with it. With this emphasis on medication education, our score would reflect our success when patients completed and returned their satisfaction survey with a greater than 65% percentile rank for the Medication domain.

With a patient-centered approach, emphasizing consistency and standardization of practice, we piloted the Teach Back program on our CT unit. Following an initial trial period of three months, success was demonstrated by our HCAHPS data (11th percentile to 80th percentile). Implementation to the rest of Medical Surgical units followed.

The CT unit was the pilot unit to determine efficacy and practicality prior to hospital-wide implementation. On this unit, 100% of the nursing staff, approximately 50 nurses, were educated on how to use teach back when educating patients/family on any new medications the patient was given during their hospitalization. This education included discussing the medication purpose and limiting education to only 2-3 side effects. Nurses were introduced to new tools that would be used to ensure standardization and consistency of practice, and to meet documentation requirements. This training occurred over a period of two months to capture all nurses.

Pharmacy helped to develop printed materials for patient education which contained basic medication purposes and side effects of the most common medications given in the hospital. A medication education record was created to communicate the medication side effects educated for a particular patient between nurses. Educational materials given and reviewed with patient upon admission were kept at the bedside throughout the length of stay to ensure all pertinent education was available for reinforcement education and upon discharge.

Outcomes
Since its implementation throughout our three-hospital system, the CT unit has exhibited an improvement from HCAHPS data in July 2012 moving from the 11th percentile (56% top box) to the 82nd percentile (69% top box) in the fourth quarter of 2013. The Medical-Surgical floors as a whole have demonstrated an improvement with data moving from the 47th percentile in the first quarter of 2013 (62% top box) to a 62nd percentile in the fourth quarter of 2013 (65% top box).

Teach Back is now a standard of practice for patient education within Cottage Health System, and specifically for patient’s medications.
Once all the new forms were completed and approved, staff trained and deemed competent, a specific start date was identified. Over a three month period, a noted improved impact on HCAHPS score was demonstrated which led to a plan for hospital wide implementation with identified attainable timelines. 32 departments and services were tasked in this collaboration to ensure system wide buy-in and support. The Medical-Surgical units were the first to adopt, realizing the value in the plan. Training and education for 100% Medical-Surgical nursing staff was completed in January of 2013 and continued marked success has been noted. This ultimately has led to many other departments, both nursing and support services, reaching out for help with implementing Teach Back within their disciplines.

The Teach Back program started with an idea from a new graduate nurse in a Shared Governance meeting on our CT unit. From that idea with fortitude determination including a very well planned out strategic implementation plan, its success is evident by the scores from our patients. Nothing that we did was really new or innovative, but when put together as a package, it worked and worked well for our patients.

For nursing, it afforded the chance to evaluate/reevaluate current practices for consistency of education and true patient understanding of their medication. Starting on a small (unit level) with regular test of change and input from staff and patients made the transition easier before spreading or scaling up. Creating consensus and involvement of stakeholders was essential to secure a positive impact of this process change. Manager support and executive sponsorship were also essential to move this program forward.

The Teach Back practice can be adapted for all types of education. Using “trust and verify” practice along with peer observations kept the program honest, real and is essential to its success. To replicate with the same and/or different tools with allocated resources and management support could and should be done.

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