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Continuity of care for short-stay neurosurgery patients: A quality improvement initiative

By Pikka Lam, Carole L. White, Sharron Runions, and Carole-Ann Miller

Decreases in the length of hospital stay for patients undergoing spinal surgery prompted this evaluation of the post-discharge needs of patients and the strategies that patients and their families employ to meet these needs. The nature and extent of post-discharge problems experienced by newly discharged patients was required as a baseline for the evaluation and improvement of discharge planning. Forty patients were interviewed following discharge, 20 patients within the first week of discharge, and 20 different patients between three and four weeks after discharge. Most patients reported that they had been well-informed about pain management and the majority of patients reported that pain was well-controlled. There was a subset of patients, however, who continued to report high levels of pain, even at one month after discharge. Less than one in three patients stated that they had received information about wound care and the information received was not consistent among health professionals. Given the limited time to prepare patients for discharge, this project highlights the need for written materials and for systematic follow-up after discharge.