

Communication about Medication in the Emergency Department: A Quality Improvement Project



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Introduction

- In the U.S., there are 130 million visits to the E.D. annually and 79.5% of visits to an ED in 2019 involved some form of drug therapy (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018).
- Effective communication between patients and their health care teams has been consistently associated with **improved health outcomes** and **improved patient safety**²⁻¹¹
- A major **barrier** to clear communication is poor health literacy, which is a global, national, and local problem¹²⁻¹⁶
- Patients with poor health literacy are at an **increased risk** for adverse outcomes, including more frequent hospitalizations, poorer preventative health care, poorer overall health status, and higher mortality rates¹⁷⁻¹⁸
- Healthcare workers often **overestimate** their knowledge of health literacy¹⁹
- Registered Nurse (RN) health literacy knowledge and communication skills are **essential** for improving patient's health literacy²⁰
- Several studies have suggested that the implementation of teach-back is effective in increasing patients' health literacy, however RNs don't use evidence-based recommendations for effective teaching methods **consistently**²¹⁻²⁶

Purpose & Aims

Purpose: To improve RN awareness of patient health literacy, enhance communication between nurses and patients, and increase satisfaction in communication about medication among patients.

- Project Aims**
1. Increase RN **health literacy knowledge and experience** after an educational in-service
 2. Increase RN **conviction** in the importance of using teach-back and **confidence** in using it after an educational in-service
 3. Increase **patient satisfaction** in communication about medication

Methods

Design – Pre/Post Intervention Design
Setting – 180-bed community teaching hospital
Sample – RNs in the Emergency Department
Sample Size – 27 RNs for pre-intervention survey and education, and 2 RNs for post-intervention survey.
Intervention: Educational In-service
Data Collection: July 2021 – January 2022
Instruments used:
 → Health Literacy Knowledge and Experiences Survey (HLKES-2)²⁷
 → Conviction and Confidence Scale (CCS)²⁸
 → Emergency Department Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (EDCAHPS) Survey²⁹

Results

- Aim 1**
- Average HLKES-2 overall pre-test score increased 5.5%
 - Knowledge score decreased 6%
 - Experience score increased 17%
- Aim 2**
- 7.5% increase in RN conviction in the importance of using teach-back
 - 5.9% increase in RN confidence in using teach-back
- Aim 3**
- 10% decrease in "Yes, definitely" answers from patients to the questions in the "Communication about Medication" domain of the EDCAHPS survey from 3 months prior to intervention to 3 months post-intervention

Discussion

- slight increase in RN knowledge and experience with health literacy
- increase in RN conviction in the importance of using teach-back
- increase in RN confidence in using teach-back
- Decrease in patient satisfaction from July 2021 to January 2022

Note, no findings were statistically significant

Conclusion

The project provided a baseline stepping stone for future research into patient satisfaction with communication about medication, so that healthcare teams may better serve patients and prevent potential medicine errors caused by unsatisfactory discourse between RNs and patients. It also highlighted several key areas for future exploration.

Areas for Future Research

- Validation of Conviction and Confidence Scale tool
- The need for Patient Health Literacy scholarship
- Best practices to implement teach-back education
- Best practices in post-intervention data gathering
- RN participation in quality improvement projects
- RN participation in work initiatives in general

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