

Transitions Between Hospital and Home

Early in the Hospital Admission: Assess Health Literacy

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Patients who have multiple conditions and complex needs may require care across different health care settings (e.g., hospitals, family physicians, specialists etc.), which could potentially pose serious risks to their safety and quality of their care. Incomplete or inaccurate transfer of information, lack of comprehensive follow up care, and/or medication errors at the time of transition could be very dangerous and cause serious, preventable harm to patients. Furthermore, the impact of these risks may be intensified by patients and families who feel unprepared for self-management, and are unsure of how to access appropriate health care providers for follow-up.

Figure 1 is an outline of **innovative practices and evidence-informed best practices** that are designed to improve transitions between hospital and home.

The use of these practices varies significantly across the province. Teams are encouraged to prioritize the implementation of evidence-informed best practices before adoption of the innovative practices.

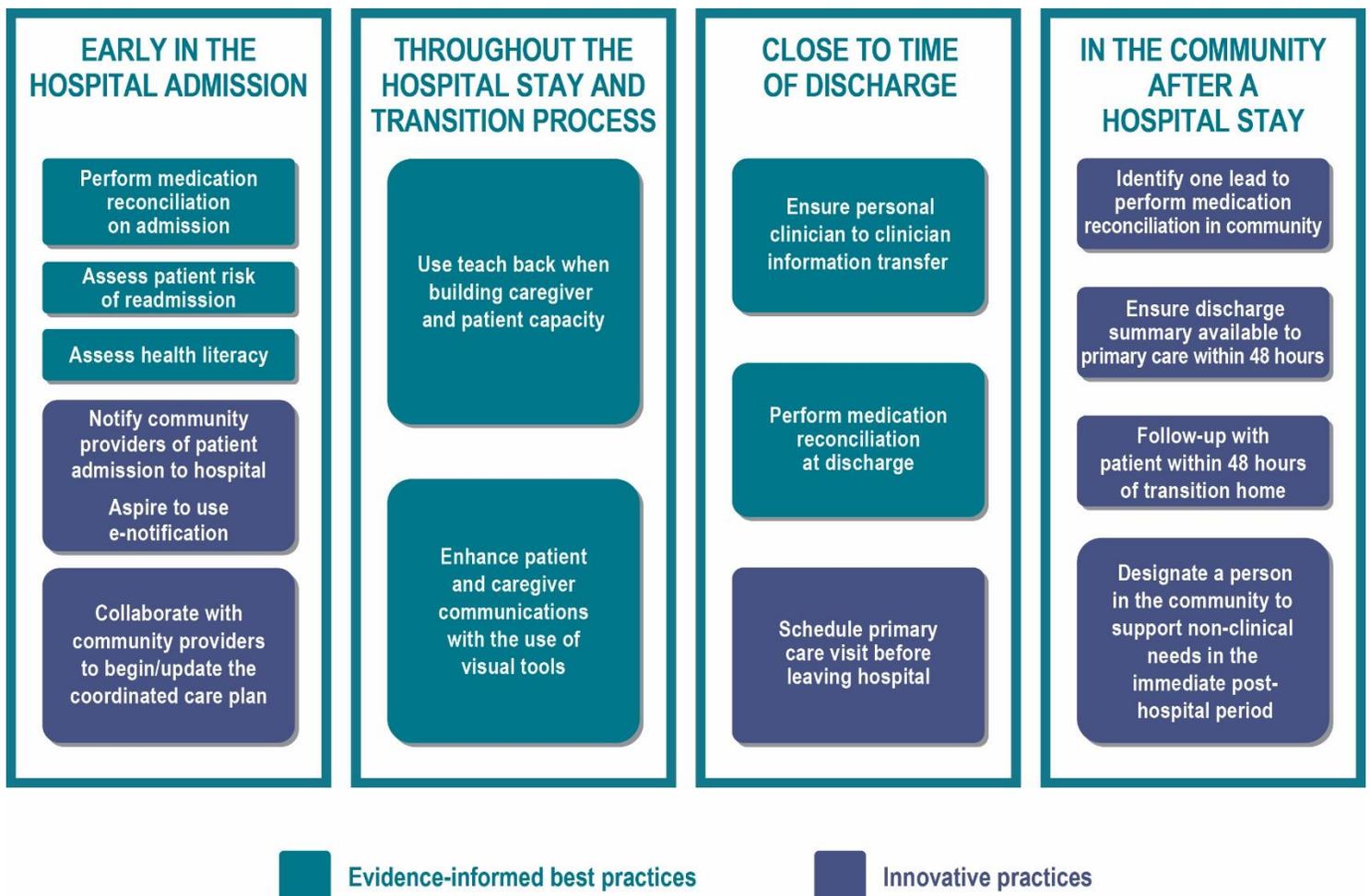


Figure 1: Practices to Improve Transitions Between Hospital and Home

Description of this Evidence-Informed Best Practice

There are many definitions of health literacy in the literature. It has been described as “the ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings across the life-course.”¹ Health literacy is essential for effective access to care and requires patients to play a more active role in management of their own care. Problems with health literacy affect all people, but patients who have multiple conditions and complex needs are most at-risk. People need information they can understand and use to make the best decisions for their health. Evidence-informed best practices recommend that health care providers assess the patient’s health literacy to create and provide relevant information and services that they can easily understand.¹

Tools and Resources

In an environmental scan and literature review, the following tools were found to be highly effective and commonly used to improve health literacy. The decision to implement or administer one of these tools must be considered alongside other locally contextually relevant information.

Assess Health Literacy		
Name of Tool	Overview	Considerations/Links
NVS (Newest Vital Sign)	<p>NVS is a tool used to assess a person’s ability to interpret a sample nutrition label.</p> <p>The tool is quick and easy to administer, requiring about three(3) minutes to answer six(6) questions and ultimately allows providers to appropriately adapt their communication practices to the patient’s health literacy level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pfizer Inc. has the NVS tool available: http://www.pfizer.com/files/health/nvs_flipbook_english_final.pdf
REALM (Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine)	<p>REALM is a validated tool that is commonly used to measure health literacy. The tool takes about two (2) minutes to administer and can be used to make inferences about the ability of a person to read and pronounce health related terms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has a word recognition test to provide clinicians with a quick, validated assessment of patient health literacy. Please contact Dr. Terry Davis at tdavis1@lsuhsc.edu to obtain permission to use the REALM. • The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality can be accessed at: http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/quality-resources/tools/literacy/index.html
Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit	<p>The North Carolina Program on Health Literacy has step-by-step guidance and tools for assessing a health care providers’ practice and supports them to make changes so they can connect with patients of all literacy levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Toolkit is available on the North Carolina Health Literacy website: http://www.nchealthliteracy.org/toolkit/toolkit_w_appendix.pdf

¹ Rootman I., Gordon-El-Bihbety D. A Vision for a Health Literate Canada – Report of the Expert Panel on Health Literacy [Internet]. Canadian Public Health Association; 2009 [cited 2016 Jul 20]. Available from: http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/portals/h-l/report_e.pdf

	<p>Designed to be used by all levels of staff in a practice providing primary care for adults and/or pediatric patients. The website includes a variety of resources including videos, teaching aids, assessment tools, a health literacy getting started toolkit and more.</p>	<p>(Specifically refer to page 123 'Health Literacy Assessment Questions')</p>
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Additional Resources

For additional information on Quality Improvement, please visit: <http://qualitycompass.hqontario.ca/portal/getting-started>.

For additional information on Health Literacy, please visit:

- *Health Quality Transformation 2013 – Health Literacy and its Effect on Health Outcomes*
<http://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/Documents/events/hqt/hqt2013-session-10-en.pdf>
- *A Support for Health Links – best PATH – Evidence Informed Improvement Package (Refer to section 4.5 “Strengthen health literacy”*
<http://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/documents/qi/health-links/bp-improve-package-transitions-en.pdf>
- *Hamilton Health Sciences – Health Literacy Connection*
<http://www.healthliteracyconnection.ca/measurement.aspx?sel=1#>
- *Health Quality Transformation 2013 – Health Literacy and its Effect on Health Outcomes*
<http://www.hqontario.ca/Portals/0/Documents/events/hqt/hqt2013-session-10-en.pdf>
(includes Teach Back video from Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN and Hamilton Health Sciences)

References

1. Rootman I., Gordon-El-Bihbety D. A Vision for a Health Literate Canada – Report of the Expert Panel on Health Literacy [Internet]. Canadian Public Health Association; 2009 [cited 2016 Jul 20]. Available from: http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/portals/h-l/report_e.pdf