



# Improving Efficiency, Consistency and Satisfaction on a Mother-Baby Unit With the Discharge Nurse Position

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Transitions in care are high-risk times in health care that present multiple opportunities for communication failure. Admissions and discharges are complex transitions deserving of focused attention. A mother-baby unit (MBU) is discharging two patients simultaneously, both with different needs and sets of instructions. Preparing a new family for discharge in a consistent,

standardized and well-focused manner, starting with admission, helps to lessen the confusion and stress for new parents and affords an opportunity for reinforcement of new learning.

**Abstract** We created a discharge nurse position on a mother-baby unit in the hopes of improving outcomes related to the discharge process. Using the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS), we documented improved outcomes with regard to efficiency, consistency, standardization of patient education and patient satisfaction. DOI: 10.1111/1751-486X.12138

**Keywords** discharge nurse | HCAHPS | patient education | patient satisfaction



## Challenges of the Discharge Process

At the time of discharge, a new mother is recovering from birth, possibly as a postoperative patient, while her hormonal shifts may be leaving her teary, her breasts are most likely sore and filling and her newborn is totally dependent on her for survival. Transitioning to new motherhood is overwhelming and stressful amid the joy of new life. Nurse theorist Ramona Mercer (2004) shares that women in this stage of the “dynamic transformation of ‘Becoming a Mother,’ have difficulty with clear thinking and retention of information” (p. 226). They’re in huge transition involving the physical, intellectual and emotional self. New par-

Specific areas viewed as  
opportunities for improvement  
at this facility were in domains  
related to discharge from  
the hospital to home

ents can reap the benefit of the MBU nursing staff giving focused attention, uninterrupted, for longer periods of time while the discharge nurse handles all scheduled discharges and offers education focused entirely on preparation for discharge. Nursing staff, in anticipation of discharge, need to prepare a woman and her

family for identification of problems, awareness of new medications, how to care for wounds and in the case of first-time parents, how to care for an infant.

Our MBU, which sees approximately 1,800 births annually, was challenged with poor discharge scores as identified through Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) surveys. The hospital is a 250-bed community hospital that has been Magnet designated since 2012. The nursing staff and leadership are empowered to be innovative in creating solutions to identified problems. The MBU practices couplet care.

The creation of a discharge nurse position was an option that had been discussed by labor and delivery charge nurses as well as MBU leadership and staff as a strategy for alleviating throughput issues on busy days in the division. The position had not been considered previously as a conduit to improving discharge patient satisfaction scores. It was probable that the discharge nurse position would affect more than one area in need of improvement.

## The Experience of Women and Families

Press Ganey (PG) and HCAHPS surveys document the experience of women and their families as they perceive them. HCAHPS surveys can be used by any acute care facility that reports data to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid

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