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Reducing Hospital Readmissions: A Nurse-led Transitional Care Mod el

Imogen Thea*

Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Basel, 48945 Basel, Switzerland

Introduction

Hospital readmissions are a significant concern for healthcare systems worldwide, burdening hospitals with additional costs and placing patients at increased risk of adverse outcomes. One of the most effective strategies to reduce avoidable readmissions is the implementation of nurse-led transitional care models. These models bridge the gap between hospital discharge and successful home recovery, offering patients a structured, supportive environment to manage their health post-discharge. The role of nurses in these models is pivotal, as they provide continuity of care, patient education and personalized support that contribute to improved health outcomes [1]. The transitional period following a hospital stay is often marked by confusion, vulnerability and poor adherence to discharge instructions. Patients frequently encounter difficulties in managing medications, scheduling follow-up appointments and recognizing early warning signs of complications. Without adequate support, these challenges often result in preventable hospital readmissions. Nurse-led transitional care models address these issues by ensuring that patients receive comprehensive discharge planning, follow-up care and continuous support tailored to their specific needs.

Description

Central to the nurse-led model is the emphasis on patient education. Nurses take the time to ensure that patients understand their diagnoses, treatment plans, medications and the importance of follow-up care. This education is often delivered through one-on-one counseling sessions, printed materials and, increasingly, digital communication tools. When patients are well-informed, they are better equipped to take charge of their health and adhere to care plans, which in turn reduce the likelihood of complications that necessitate readmission.

Another cornerstone of this model is the proactive follow-up by nurses, which may include home visits, phone calls, or telehealth consultations within the first few days after discharge. These follow- ups are critical in assessing the patient's condition, answering questions and intervening early if problems arise. Nurses are trained to recognize signs of deterioration and can coordinate timely interventions, including referrals to primary care providers or specialists, thereby preventing escalation of conditions that could lead to hospitalization [2]. Care coordination is another essential element of the nurse-led transitional care model. Nurses act as liaisons between patients, physicians, pharmacists, social workers and other members of the healthcare team. This coordination ensures that care is seamless, medications are reconciled, appointments are scheduled and patients have access to community resources. Effective care coordination helps eliminate gaps in care that often contribute to readmissions. Evidence supporting the effectiveness of nurse-led transitional care is growing. Studies have shown that these models can significantly reduce readmission rates, particularly among older adults with complex chronic conditions [3]. Furthermore, patients participating in these programs report higher levels of satisfaction and improved quality of life. Despite the proven benefits, implementation of nurse-led transitional care models faces several challenges. These include insufficient staffing, limited funding and resistance to changes in traditional healthcare delivery models [4]. However, as healthcare systems increasingly shift toward value- based care, there is growing recognition of the importance of such models. Hospitals and health systems are beginning to invest in training and resources that support nurses in transitional care roles. Reducing hospital readmissions requires a multifaceted approach and nurse-led transitional care models have emerged as a powerful solution. By focusing on patient education, proactive follow-up and effective care coordination, nurses play a vital role in ensuring safe and successful transitions from hospital to home. As healthcare continues to evolve, embracing and expanding these models will be essential for improving patient outcomes and reducing the burden of avoidable readmissions [5].

Conclusion

The growing concern over hospital readmissions has prompted healthcare systems to explore effective, patient-centered strategies to ensure continuity of care beyond hospital walls. The nurse-led transitional care model emerges as a robust and evidence-based solution to this challenge. By engaging nurses to coordinate post-discharge care, provide individualized education and facilitate timely follow-up, this model addresses many of the common gaps that lead to readmissions.

Address for Correspondence: *Imogen Thea, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Basel, 48945 Basel, Switzerland; E-mail: Thea.imogen@unibe.ch*

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Nurses, with their holistic understanding of patient needs and close interaction with patients and families, are uniquely positioned to assess risks, reinforce self-management techniques and advocate for necessary community or outpatient services. Studies consistently show that patients supported by transitional care nurses experience fewer complications, report higher satisfaction and are less likely to return to the hospital within 30 days of discharge. Furthermore, this model promotes interdisciplinary collaboration, enhances communication between providers and patients and empowers individuals to take an active role in their health management. As healthcare systems continue to shift toward value-based care, adopting and scaling nurse-led transitional care programs not only improves clinical outcomes but also aligns with the broader goals of cost containment and patient empowerment.

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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