Next Step in Care
Family Caregivers & Health Care Professionals Working Together
A United Hospital Fund Campaign

UPDATE

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New Report on Patients Who Refuse Home Health Care Services

A "transition" can mean many things, but in recent health care terminology, it generally refers to a discharge from hospital to home. But it's become increasingly apparent that a transition doesn't end when the patient walks (or is wheeled) outside the hospital door. Getting used to a new routine and figuring out new medications can go smoothly—or not. Having help at home can make the adjustment safer and easier for the patient—and for the family caregiver, who may not have been included in the discharge plan and who may need additional instruction on the required tasks. Poor transitions can lead to unwanted hospital readmissions and poor health outcomes.

Yet patients eligible for home health care services may refuse them or may not even be offered those services. To understand why this occurs and what might make appropriate referrals more acceptable, in December 2016 United Hospital Fund and the Alliance for Home Health Quality and Innovation convened a Roundtable on Home Health Care Refusals, attended by 27 clinicians, policy experts, and representatives of home health care agencies and consumer advocacy groups. Together they worked to unravel the many factors surrounding a patient's refusal, including personal choice, quality of care, and financing.

The results have just been released in a report, co-authored by Carol Levine, director of UHF's Families and Health Care Project, and Teresa Lee, former executive director of the Alliance. "I Can Take Care of Myself!": Patients' Refusals of Home Health Care describes what is known about patient refusals (not a lot) and what family caregivers think about these refusals (even less). As background for the often confusing array of services, the report describes the various forms of "home care."

The report contains a number of recommendations, among them interventions that improve communication about challenges in providing care at home and what home health care services can offer, qualitative and quantitative research on all aspects of home health care refusals, policy changes to increase access and coordination, and continuity across providers and care settings.

Looking Back: We use this forum to describe new reports and Next Step in Care guides. But we also want to remind our viewers about existing resources on the website. One example of a "golden oldie" is the short animated video, "Discharge Planning is a Family Affair." Produced by UHF staff, it's a great conversation starter.

For more commentary on family caregiving and transitions, join the conversation on our page!

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