

Post-Discharge Follow-Up to Avoid Excessive Readmissions

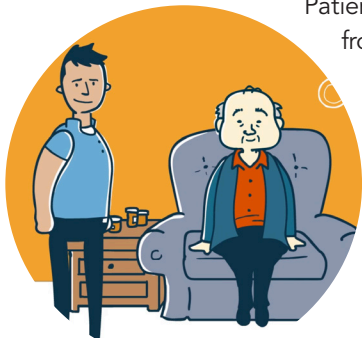


Illustration by Ruben DeLuna

Patients recently discharged from a hospital due to a serious health condition, such as heart failure, are visited at home by a community paramedic. The goal of these short-term follow-up visits is to decrease the number of patients who are readmitted to the hospital within 30 days of discharge.

How It Works

Local paramedic service providers and hospitals are collaborating to reduce the number of avoidable readmissions. These pilot projects are improving patient health outcomes and care experience while reducing hospital readmissions and unnecessary medical costs. Community paramedics provide patients who have been recently discharged from hospitals with timely follow-up visits, calls, or both. The pilot projects also coordinate activities with visiting nurses and home health care provider agencies.

Patients with the designated diagnoses are contacted by a community paramedic within 72 hours of their discharge. In a number of the pilot sites, the community paramedics visited patients in the hospital to establish a rapport prior to discharge. The community paramedics ensure that the patients understand their discharge instructions, new prescriptions, and when their next physician follow-up visit is scheduled.

The community paramedics also use their assessment skills to identify changes in health status that need to be relayed to the patient's care team before the next appointment, determine whether an additional in-person visit by a community paramedic is needed, and ensure that the patient's home environment is safe.

Results (as of September 30, 2016)

- ▶ Hospital readmissions within 30 days of discharge decreased for all sites and diagnoses except one pilot site for heart failure patients that provided less intensive services than other post-discharge pilot sites.
- ▶ Four of the five pilot sites saw significant cost savings for payers, primarily Medicare and Medi-Cal, due to reductions in inpatient readmissions. The fifth pilot site reduced 30-day readmissions, but the reduction was too small to offset the cost of operating the project.
- ▶ Community paramedics helped patients avoid adverse health effects due to misunderstanding medication instructions or having duplicate medications. Community paramedics worked with patients to understand their medications and assisted patients in obtaining refills, if needed.

Partners

LOCAL EMS AGENCY	LEAD AGENCY	HEALTH CARE SYSTEM PARTNERS	EMS PROVIDER PARTNERS	LOCATIONS
Alameda County	Alameda County EMS Agency	Alameda City Hospital	Alameda City Fire Department	City of Alameda
Los Angeles	UCLA Center for Prehospital Care	Glendale Adventist Hospital	Glendale Fire Department	City of Glendale
San Bernardino County	San Bernardino County Fire Department	Arrowhead Regional Medical Center	San Bernardino County and Rialto Fire Departments	San Bernardino County (5 cities)
Sierra Sacramento Valley	Butte County EMS	Enloe Hospital	Butte County EMS	Butte County
Solano County	Medic Ambulance	North Bay Medical Center	Medic Ambulance	Solano County



For more information on community paramedicine programs operating today in California, visit www.emsa.ca.gov/community_paramedicine.