

Follow-Up after Hospitalization for Mental Illness

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

It is important to provide follow-up therapy to patients after they have been hospitalized for mental illness and/or intentional self-harm. An outpatient visit with a mental health practitioner after discharge is recommended to make sure that the patient's transition to the home or work environment is supported and that gains made during the hospitalization are not lost. It also helps health care providers detect early post hospitalization reactions or medication problems and provide continuing care.

A large study¹ looking at Commercial and Medicaid databases of patients hospitalized for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder between 2010 and 2014, concluded that outpatient visits by these cohorts during the 30 days after discharge were associated with a lower hospital readmission risk during the following 90 days.

¹Marcus, S, Chuang, C, et al; Outpatient Follow-Up Care and Risk of Hospital readmission in schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder. *Psychiatric Services* 2017, 68:1246;doi:10.1176/appi.ps.201600498 accessed 2/25/20 @ <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1176/appi.ps.20160498>

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Create a process to identify patients discharged after hospitalization for a mental illness or self-harm diagnosis
- Assist in scheduling follow-up appointments with the patient as soon as the patient is discharged – there should be one appointment within 7 days of discharge and one appointment within 30 days of discharge
- Develop outreach systems or assign case managers to encourage recently released patients to keep follow-up appointments or reschedule missed appointments
- Educate your patients of the importance of these follow-up visits
- Facilitate referrals to behavioral health care specialists when appropriate
- Encourage your patients to utilize clinical psychologists, clinical social workers, psychiatric nurse specialists, and marriage and family therapists
- Encourage a telephone visit, e-visit, or virtual check-in when appropriate

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) @ https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKewjQn-nRyvDqAhU6g3IEHRB3CNcQFjADegQIBRAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org%2FHome%2FGetFileByID%2F218&usq=AOvVaw2yZ9TqORR-INR_A1Fdw8-M

Primary Care PTSD Screen (PC-PTSD) @ <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/documents/pc-ptsd5-screen.pdf>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1.800.273.TALK (8255)