
POSTER ABSTRACT

Perception of continuity of care after a hospital visit: focus group with Patient Committees

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Background: Transitions between different care settings can interrupt continuity of care, representing a period of risk for patients. To ensure effective coordination, medical and medication information must be shared with primary care providers.

To improve patient health and safety, many hospitals set up a Patient Committee (PC). This committee, named “Users' Committee” or “Patient Partner Committee”, is composed of patients who get involved in their hospital to enhance the quality of care and services. Their mission is to share their opinions and experiences as patients while working with healthcare professionals.

Approach: The objective of this study was to explore patients' perceptions of continuity of care after a hospital visit.

A qualitative study was conducted with the PC from different Belgian hospitals. Focus groups were held at the hospital committee. PCs were recruited voluntarily by e-mail. An interview guide was developed with three types of questions: an opening question, transition questions and key questions. Focus groups were carried out until theoretical data saturation, recorded, transcribed verbatim and analysed in a double-blind fashion using abductive thematic analysis. Data were organised using NVIVO 15 software.

Results: The results were structured into four themes corresponding to the topics covered in the interview guide: barriers to continuity of care, facilitators to continuity of care, important providers in continuity of care and the information transfer between different care settings. However, sub-themes were identified inductively. The barriers identified by the participants included the financial issues, the fear of asking health professionals for information and the lack of knowledge about the different services offered by the social security or the municipality. The facilitators identified were being systematically treated in the same group of hospitals and access to healthcare documents via an IT platform called “Réseau Santé Wallon”. Caregivers, social workers and general physician

appear to be the essential providers of effective continuity of care. Finally, the establishment of a hospital-home liaison booklet could facilitate the transfer of information from the hospital to the home.

Implications: This qualitative study highlighted the importance of developing the role of integrated care coordinator within a hospital to improve continuity of care after a hospital visit.