It’s Time to Teach Back: An Inter-professional Approach to Enhance Learning and Reduce Readmissions

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It's Time to Teach Back: An Inter-professional Approach to Enhance Learning and Reduce Readmissions

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Background
According to the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), one of the typical failures in health care education is the failure to ask clarifying questions related to the key learner’s ability to understand and act on healthcare information. Failing to identify the key learner and cramming patient and family education into brief sessions at the time of discharge negatively impacts the safety and quality of patient outcomes.

What is Teach Back?
- Teach Back is an effective communication strategy used to evaluate learning.
- Teach Back strategies assess the key learner’s knowledge, attitude, and the likelihood that behavioral changes may occur after discharge.
- Teach Back strategies place the burden of learning on the health care professional and not on the key learner.
  - “So that I know I did a good job teaching you, I will ask you a few questions.”
  - “If you were talking to your neighbor this afternoon, what would you tell him we talked about today?”
  - “To make sure I covered all the key points on how to give an injection, I will ask you to show me the steps you will take when you give yourself your injection at home.”

Project Design
- Formed an inter-professional work team made up of 10 health care clinicians from both the inpatient and outpatient environment.
- Collaborated with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in an effort to reduce readmissions in high-leverage areas.
- Conducted a pilot study using a three-day integrated teach back process on an adult medical-surgical unit for individuals diagnosed with heart failure.

Methods
- Conducted small tests of change on pilot units using bedside PDSA cycles and LEAN methodologies.
- Created a standard work process using teach back strategies to provide more effective education encounters.
- Created and implemented network wide education for all health care professionals responsible for providing education to patients and families.
  - eLearning Training (1488 professionals)
  - Instructor Led “Train the Trainer” Workshops (137 professionals)
  - Performance validation of Teach Back Standard Work (all patient care units)
- Closely reviewed metrics related to documentation compliance of learner outcomes and hospital readmission rates for the heart failure population.

Results
- The 30 day readmission rate and the length of stay days for readmissions were reduced for patients who received teach back as part of their educational encounter.
  - Over a three month period (July to September, 2010), 469 heart failure patients were evaluated
  - 180 patients received teach back
  - 289 patients did not receive teach back

Practice Implications
- Designing and implementing a comprehensive educational curriculum for clinical staff aimed at using teach back as a method to evaluate individual learning outcomes may impact patient and family satisfaction, improve hand over communication between disciplines and has the potential to decrease readmissions and the average length of stay in the hospital setting.
- Teach back is a general concept that can be applied to multiple disease states. Additional teach back modules are being developed for:
  - Anticoagulation
  - COPD
  - Myocardial Infarction
  - Hypoglycemia
  - Stroke
  - Community Acquired Pneumonia