

Visual care plans to enhance communication and efficiency



Ben Wassell, Angelo Angeles, Tony Young, Janne Moore
ABI Rehabilitation, Auckland, New Zealand

Introduction

Clients within ABI Rehabilitation present with a variety of support needs due to neurological injuries or conditions. The current primary methods of sharing this information among staff has been through individualised written care plans (WCP). WCP comprise of multiple pages of information which staff are required to review several times per day to ensure safe client management. Research suggests that the use of pictures over or in addition to words has demonstrated improvements to attention, comprehension, recall, and adherence within health settings (1).

ABI Rehabilitation's objective was to develop a more efficient method of sharing important client information through the use of visual care plans (VCP) to improve employee efficiency.

Methods

A working group explored the assimilation of written information into a VCP aiming to increase ease of use, reduce time taken to review and maximise patient safety. Input surrounding care plans from nursing/medical, allied health and floor staff that needs to be shared was collected. This included gathering ideas around the illustration.

The final draft was trialled in parallel with the current WCP's over a 6-week period. The trial took place in one of the residential houses. During this 10 staff members were timed locating 5 pieces of specific client information from the WCP followed by 5 pieces of similar information on the VCP. The time taken to complete this was recorded along with subjective feedback on ease of use and any general feedback.

Results

Client: "David Maxwell"

DOB: 01 / 01 / 65

SHOWERING	Supervision	Transfer board
TRANSFER	x 1 Assist	Commode
OUTDOOR MOBILITY	x 2 Assist	Gutter Frame
COMMUNICATION	Poor Hearing	Practice Turn Taking
COMMUNICATION	Allergies	Allergic to Penicillin, refer to care plan

Average time to locate the 5 pieces of information was:

USING WCP 5.65 minutes compared to USING VCP 1.85

Consensus among staff was:

Increased ease of use

Increased efficiency

Improved confidence in client management

Greater consistency in client care

However, VCP challenges were reported and addressed.

Discussion

The use of a VCP has the potential to share information safely and more efficiently than the WCP version. The VCP was popular among staff, quickly provided useful/needed information enabling enhanced consistency of care. Most importantly the results indicate that there are definite time saving benefits to the VCP over the WCP allowing greater time to provide services for clients. In this study we looked at 5 pieces of information across 10 staff members who

were familiar to the clients. The reality of the day to day work is that there is a constant need to access client care information in a timely manner. It is suggested that with multiple staff and multiple clients such benefits would be extrapolated. An identified issue of the visual care plan was that some areas required more information than what could be displayed through illustration. The plan to address this was to have a link to the written care plan where required.

References

1 Houts PS, Doak CC, Doak LG, et. Al. The role of pictures in improving health communication: A review of research on attention, comprehension, recall, and adherence. Patient Education and Counseling 2006; 61: 173-190.

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ABI New Zealand Ltd

Auckland: 09-831-0070

Wellington: 04-237-0128

www.abi-rehab.co.nz

enquiry@abi-rehab.co.nz