The Effectiveness of Discharge Planning in Mental Health: An Integrative Review of Literature

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An Integrative Literature Review
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Background
- Mental health inpatient treatment goals revolve around crisis stabilization and structure.
- A recent evolution of mental health care has led to shorter inpatient hospital stays due to insurance-driven health plans that place pressure on providers to expedite discharge.
- Discharge planning aims to improve the continuity of care between hospitalization and community-based care.
- This transition is particularly challenging in mental health because readmission rates are high and utilization of aftercare is low.

Objective
The aim of this review was to explore the most effective ways in which a provider can help to smooth the transition for psychiatric patients back into community-based care following an inpatient hospital stay.

Methods
- An integrative review of literature was conducted using the databases CINAHL, PsycINFO, and PubMed.
- Findings were summarized in a data table, organized using inclusion/exclusion criteria, and analyzed systematically
- 10 articles were selected for inclusion
- Theoretical Framework: Tidal Model of Mental Health Recovery by Phil Barker

Research Question
What are the current, most effective discharge planning practices for hospitalized patients in mental health care?

Results
- User Involvement
  - Patients play a pivotal role in planning. Their strengths and learned skills must be considered.
  - Family involvement was reported as highly important during care transition.

- Early Planning
  - Coordinating care with outside resources is time-consuming; the process should begin at admission.

- Follow-Up
  - Appointments should be scheduled before discharge and calls made to confirm attendance.

User Involvement/Social Support
- Patients play pivotal role in planning. Their strengths and learned skills must be considered.
- Family involvement was reported as highly important during care transition.

Early Planning
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Follow Up
- Appointments should be scheduled before discharge and calls made to confirm attendance.

Nursing Implications
- Nurses are vital to the discharge planning process as they work within interdisciplinary mental health teams and coordinate care for patients.
- The mental health population is particularly vulnerable to post-hospital deterioration.
- There are potentially serious consequences for mental health patients at discharge: high rates of medication non-compliance, relapse, and increased re-hospitalization.
- Nurses can ensure improvements of planning practices in order to help patients’ transitions in care and lower inpatient readmission rates.

Conclusion
- Shorter admissions have led to mental health patients experiencing more transitions of care which heightens the need for better discharge planning.
- Overall, the current literature is limited in providing evidence of successful specific practices. This suggests a need for further research.

References