

Impacting the Health Literacy of Persons Living with a New Ostomy: An Innovative and Interactive Approach

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Topic

The Joint Commission Public Policy Initiative was launched in 2001 with a mission to improve the safety and quality of health-care provided to the public.¹ In alignment with this mission, an outbound calling program was developed to provide ongoing information and support to people after ostomy surgery.

Purpose

Research sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has found that more than one-third of the patients who left the hospital in need of more care failed to get that care. In a study funded by AHRQ, one of the recommendations included phoning the patient 2 to 3 days after discharge to identify and resolve any problems.²

Annually, approximately 76,521 new stomas are created in the United States.³ Patients receive their initial teaching in the hospital, where their average length of stay is 1-5 days. Many patients will then receive an average of 3 to 45 days of home visits from a home health nurse. On average, 97% of a person's life after surgery (or approx. 14 years based on a weighted average) is spent outside of the care of a professional healthcare provider.³ Following that period of time, the largest influence in the patient's ostomy care is traditionally the retailer from whom he obtains his supplies, not a certified expert in ostomy care. A need exists for patients to obtain appropriate and accurate information from expert WOC nurses. An outbound calling program developed by an ostomy manufacturer* provides persons with new stomas the ability to speak directly with WOC nurses, providing an educational link to their adaptation post surgery.

Objective

The overall objective of the outbound calling program is to impact the health literacy for individuals after ostomy surgery in alignment with the initiatives of JCAHO, AHRQ, and other governing bodies.

Structure of the Outbound Calling Program*

The program begins when the individual receives a sampling of the manufacturer's products selected by an acute care or home health nurse. A WOC nurse will then make an outbound call in an attempt to determine the person's ability to care for the new ostomy, provide educational support if needed, and raise awareness of available resources. Once it is determined what product the patient is using, the nurse identifies any user questions or issues regarding the pouching system, reviews the level of understanding of how to apply and remove the selected system and discusses the importance of maintaining healthy skin around the stoma. If needed, information on reimbursement, where to buy supplies and other products available is provided. The patient is made aware of the availability of WOC nurses in a call center to answer future questions. If unable to reach the person by phone, educational pieces and resource information will be sent by mail. The program offers ongoing support and access to WOC nurses for all those enrolled in the program.

*LifeEmbrace™ Program

LifeEmbrace is a trademark of ConvaTec Inc.

1. "What Did the Doctor Say?": Improving Health Literacy to Protect Patient Safety. White Paper. 2007. The Joint Commission. Oakbrook Terrace, IL.

2. Better Information Helps Patients When They Leave the Hospital, By Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D. December 16, 2008.
<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/cc/cc121608.htm>. Accessed October 6, 2009.

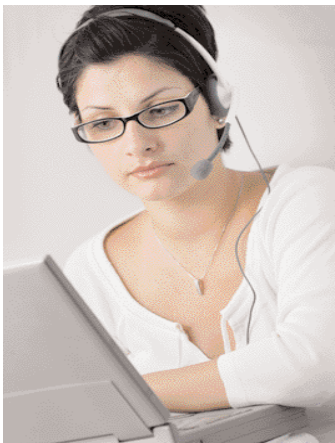
3. An Epidemiology Study, Life Expectancy Estimates After Ostomy Surgery, Conducted by Cynthia Willey, Ph.D., EpiSource Consultants L.L.C., Literature Review focused upon studies on the outcomes of ostomy surgery cited in the National Library of Medicine from 1990 to 2007.

4. Life Embrace 6-Month Feedback Survey. Data on File at ConvaTec (AP-007784-US). July, 2009.

Outcomes

Patient Responses to Program Satisfaction⁴

Satisfaction with information provided by the Outbound Calling Program*	
Patient requested information by topic	% Satisfaction (n=205)
Condition or Disease	88.62%
Nutrition	82.35%
Resources available for questions	87.50%
Support by ostomy manufacturers	86.62%
Where to purchase supplies	86.78%
New product information	90.17%
Patient support groups	80.92%
Costs/Reimbursement	88.53%
Lifestyle w/ostomy	86.36%
Skin sensitivity	85.22%



Overall Satisfaction with Program* and Follow up Nurse Call	
Survey Question	% Satisfaction (n=205)
Overall satisfaction with information and support provided through the Outbound Calling Program	93.12%
Satisfaction with Follow-up Nurse phone call after discharge	96.29%

Demographics

Age	# Responses
0-17	0
18-29	2
30-39	2
40-49	11
50-59	30
60-69	68
70-79	60
80+	32
Total	205

Type of Surgery	# Responses
Colostomy	100
Ileostomy	55
Urostomy	49
Did not answer	1
Total	205

Testimonials

"All of my questions have been answered by the staff at (the company) – great people, great help, could not have done it without them." - *Bob H.*

"I just wanted to say how much the info and support from (the company) has made recovery and ostomy care so much easier than I expected. Thanks for all you do"- *Ed S.*

"I really appreciate that you girls have helped me with this new life change experience-we are in the 7th month and still learning-but thanks, thanks a lot"- *Barb L.*

"I welcome a clinical colleague calling my patients after discharge from the hospital. They understand what the patient faces at home, and can recognize when issues like weartime, leakage or change in stool consistency arise. The WOCNs calling know the products well. My practice is in Alaska, so access to supplies is sometimes a concern. I appreciate referrals to retailers who can arrange delivery to remote regions. The phone call helps to meet their educational needs, bridging the gap between their discharge and follow up visit. In fact, my patients often mention the call during my follow up visits with them. Overall, it is a value added service provided, and the bottom line for me is that it is all about the patient." - *Roselyn Lewis, BSN, RN, CWOCN*

Conclusion

The outbound calling program* has made an impact on health literacy for more than 35,000 people with new stomas since the initiation of the program in January 2008. Call focus includes education about products to meet their needs and to help improve their quality of life, assistance with questions about reimbursement and purchase, and information on advocating support groups. In addition, they are made aware of the availability of a WOC nurse staff as an ongoing source of professional information.

Overall, the outbound calling program has been an effective way to impact health literacy for people living with an ostomy. Many educational needs are addressed in the conversation between a WOC nurse and the customer. Individuals surveyed reported satisfaction that the information received met their needs and overall reported they were 93.12% satisfied with the information and support provided. The survey further indicates an opportunity to expand the offering of information and resources in regard to nutrition and support group availability. The outbound calling program is a valuable resource for ongoing support and education for persons living with a new ostomy.