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NURSES IMPROVING CARE FOR HEALTHSYSTEM ELDERS

Need to Know for Patients and Families

*What patients
and their
families need to
know before
hospitalization
or a nursing
home admission*

Dementia Transition Series

What to Communicate at the Hospital

Definition: Dementia is a decline in memory and other cognitive functions severe enough to interfere with daily functioning.

Why Is It Important? Patients and caregivers are the primary sources of knowledge that must be communicated during and after hospitalization. Knowing what to ask and what to share can help ensure the patient receives quality care.

What Should Patients and Caregivers Ask?

1. Ask how long the patient will be in the hospital and what procedures and tests are expected. Ask about medications, anesthesia, catheters, and IV's. Medications, as well as general anesthesia may have side effects. Ask why new medications are ordered and how often they will be given. Make sure all previous medications for chronic conditions are continued and if not, ask why they are not being continued in the hospital. If anesthesia is needed, ask to talk to the anesthesiologist about options.
2. Caregivers should ask to be present during transfers off units to tests or procedures where change can be disruptive and confusing for the patient. Ask to be allowed in the recovery room, if applicable.
3. Patient and caregiver should ask the hospital staff to avoid using physical and chemical (medication) restraints.
 - Meet daily needs, such as toileting in the bathroom
 - Ask about non-medication ways to provide comfort (music, pastoral care, family visits)
 - Offer activities and recreational therapy, as available
4. Consider a private room if surrounding noise is disruptive.

What Should Caregivers Share?

1. Inform the hospital staff as soon as possible if your loved one suddenly seems worse or different.
2. Help keep your loved one safe. Tell staff about any previous wandering, getting lost, falls, and/or unusual behavior.
3. Share what works best to communicate with your loved one. This is especially important for those with hearing or visual impairment.
4. Explain what upsets your loved one and what works to make him or her calm and feel comfortable. Help teach the hospital staff what approach works best with your loved one.
5. Advance Directives — What are your loved one's wishes regarding life-sustaining treatment, such as feeding tubes, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and life support?



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