

17th European Heart Disease and Heart Failure Congress &

2nd International Conference on

Cardiovascular Medicine and Cardiac Surgery

March 15-17, 2017 London, UK

Improving the quality of heart failure discharge summaries

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High quality discharge summaries facilitate safe transfer of care by communicating relevant clinical information to GPs after hospital discharge. This is especially important in complex clinical syndromes such as chronic heart failure where multidisciplinary teams are required to effectively co-ordinate community care and minimize the risk of re-hospitalization. The quality of heart failure discharge summaries issued by the two district general hospitals within our Trust was assessed. We tested the effectiveness of a discharge summary checklist intended to improve documentation. All issued discharge summaries following unplanned hospital admissions with a primary diagnosis of heart failure were identified over a three month period using Hospital Episodes Statistics data. The content of each discharge summary was objectively assessed using a point based scoring technique. Junior doctors working on a single ward were exposed to a checklist poster providing guidance on composing a quality heart failure discharge summary (n=24). Their performance was compared against doctors working on other wards who were not exposed to the checklist (n=84). A total of 164 discharge summaries were assessed. In the ward exposed to the discharge summary checklist poster the mean discharge summary score was 6.1+/-0.59. In the wards that weren't exposed to the checklist, the mean discharge summary score was significantly poorer 2.7+/-0.19 (p<0.001). Our study demonstrates that the provision of a checklist was associated with a statistically significant improvement in the quality of heart failure discharge summaries issued by our Trust. This intervention was simple to implement at minimal cost and potentially helps junior doctors communicate more effectively with primary care.

Biography

Neil Bodagh is an Academic Foundation Year 2 Doctor at Barts Health NHS Trust. His foundation year 1 training was completed at Barking, Havering and Redbridge NHS Trust. He completed his undergraduate training at University of Manchester in 2015.

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