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Safer discharge at The Royal Women's Hospital Emergency Department

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Emergency Departments (ED's) are a very unique environment and unlike any other within a hospital setting. Compounding issues of increased patient presentations, increasing complexity of disease and overcrowding, increased levels of violence and pressures of National Emergency Access Targets (NEAT) all expose patients to risk at a critical point in their journey. That critical point is discharge. Patient experience in the emergency department is also an important element of the discharge process, with evidence linking satisfaction to clinical outcomes and that satisfied patients are more likely to be compliant and respond to treatment. Patients often feel pushed or rushed through the emergency system due to competing demands of clinicians. We also know that women have competing priorities regarding their health and have specific health needs. At The Royal Women's Hospital in Melbourne with approximately 35,000 obstetric/neonatal or gynecological presentations per year, our patient cohort has very specific needs and expectations, especially related to their disposition. Patient misunderstanding of discharge instructions is consistently reported throughout the literature, this exposes our women to greater risk of re-presentation within the first few weeks post discharge. What will be presented is stage 1 of The Royal Women's Hospital emergency department project, with which a primary outcome is to improve emergency patients understanding of discharge plans and decrease adverse outcomes and re-presentation rates to the ED. A secondary outcome is to involve patients more collaboratively with their care and in turn improve patient satisfaction.

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