



Tips for Communicating with Patients

Many patients are unaware of hospitalists, their roles and most importantly the hospitalist's relationship with their primary care physician. This can cause confusion, skepticism and can impact the care if patients do not answer questions honestly.

These scripts, developed by experienced hospitalists at SHM, can help ease the initial transition into hospital care.

It is likely several different physicians work in your hospitalist group, often with different personalities and communication styles. By using creating a script for you hospitalist group, you can standardize the introduction, potentially saving time, reducing question and increasing patients' compliance.

Scripts should not make physicians robots, rather they should be used as a tool to guide content for the conversation when first meeting a patient. The introduction should be short and simple and address three main questions: who, what and why.

It is suggested that hospitalist groups prepare two scripts, one for patients who are very accepting of care by a hospitalist and a second for those patients who are more concerned or interested.

Basic script

Walk in and shake the patient's hand or put your hand on them.

"Hello, My name is Dr. X. I understand that you are Dr. Smith's patients. I take care of Dr. Smith's patients while they are in the hospital. I will be in communication with Dr. Smith throughout your stay and he/she will be provided a full report at admission and discharge so he/she knows exactly what is going on."

Extended Script

Patients may ask more about you, why you are there or how their doctor is since you work together to which you can respond with:

“Dr. Smith and I will be in communication throughout your stay. We have found that, by working together, we can monitor you more closely and adjust your treatment as necessary. My colleagues and I are also available to you and your family throughout the day to answer any questions or concerns you may have about your treatment at the hospital.”

Team Script

Your hospitalist group may also consider giving a basic script to members of the hospital team including ER doctors and nurses to manage the perception of hospitalists during the transition of care between specialists.

“Your doctor wants you to see [HOSPITALIST’S NAME] who is a hospitalist and works in the hospital all day. He/She has treated many patients with your condition and we trust in his/her expertise.”

This type of scripting shows that the hospital is concerned about the care of the patients and promotes the experience of the hospitalist in the quality of care.

This resource was created for you by SHM, the premier medical society representing hospitalists. For more information about SHM, visit www.hospitalmedicine.org.