

Continuity and Coordination of Care and Communication with the Primary Care Practitioner

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Continuity of care is a defining attribute of primary care and a core element of the *Institute of Medicine's* definition of primary care. Continuity is generally recognized to have three dimensions: continuity in information, in management and the physician-patient relationship. Relationship continuity is the ongoing interaction of a patient with one physician which results in increased knowledge of patient preferences, better communication and improved trust.

Such outpatient continuity has shown to be associated with improved patient satisfaction, increased use of appropriate preventive health services, greater medication compliance, lower hospitalization rates, more appropriate end of life care, and lower cost.

Communication with the patient's primary care practitioner (PCP) following a visit to an urgent care site or emergency room, as well as after a patient is discharged from an inpatient facility, is a crucial aspect of continuity and coordination of care. Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island's (Neighborhood) claims data suggests there is room for improvement in communication with a patient's PCP after such a visit.

When a patient is discharged from one of these settings, we encourage providers to inform the patient's PCP site about the plan of care. There should be collaboration between the care team and aftercare provider on a range of topics including:

- Medication reconciliation
- Enhanced patient education and empowerment
- Home visits or telephone calls by clinical providers
- Transitional care managers
- Early post-discharge follow-up

Patient instructions should consider the patient's cognitive status, health literacy and other barriers to self-care. Multiple concurrent interventions may be more effective than single components.

Additionally, explaining to the member why follow-up is necessary within a specific timeframe will motivate the patient to see their PCP. If the member does not have or know how to contact their PCP, the member can call Neighborhood Member Services for assistance connecting with their PCP. Members can find the phone number for their plan on their Neighborhood card.

These initiatives have shown promise in minimizing readmission and increasing patient satisfaction.