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A Pilot Study for Enhancing Postpartum Discharge Instructions for Incision Care: Assessment of Comprehension

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Introduction

• Literacy and Health Care
  • 14.5% of United States is illiterate1
  • Reading level of most medical forms is 10th grade2
• Improving Outcomes with a Visual Aid
  • Cesarean Surgical Site Infection (SSI) rate is 5%3
  • A patient with a SSI can be 2 times as expensive4
  • Visual aids improve information recall5 and confidence in wound care6

• Study Objectives
  1. To evaluate the readability of the cesarean wound care discharge instructions relative to the patient population’s reading level
  2. To conduct a pilot Randomized Control Trial (RCT) to evaluate the effectiveness of a visual aid on improving comprehension of the cesarean wound care instructions

Methods

Objective 1:
• Discharge Instruction Evaluation
• Patient Reading Level Test: REALM
  3 readability assessments:
  • Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test
  • SMOG Readability Test
  • Fry Readability Test

Objective 2: RCT conducted on the postpartum floor of Thomas Jefferson University Hospital (TJUH)
• Participants: postpartum cesarean patients ages 18-50 (excluded patients who were non-native English speakers)
• Randomized to receive the current written discharge instructions with (intervention) or without (control) a corresponding visual aid
• Study Procedures:
  • Review discharge instructions
  • Standard teach back
  • Comprehension quiz
  • REALM
  • Demographic survey
  • 2 Week follow up comprehension quiz
  • Visual aid offered to controls

Results

• Readability Assessments
  • Discharge Instruction Readability Evaluation
    | Flesch-Kincaid | SMOG | Fry |
    | 6.4           | 11   | 8.3 |

Participant Reading Level Evaluation
• REALM: 18% (6/32) of participants read at a 7-8th grade level
• Demographic Survey: 44% (14/32) ≤ High School

• Visual Aid RCT – Preliminary Results

Table 1 – Participant Characteristics. Parity, prior abdominal surgery, and BMI also did not differ between study groups.

Table 2 – Comprehension Quiz Results

Other Results
• Married participants were 23.2 times more likely to score ≥90% in either comprehension assessment.
• 64% (7/11) controls requested to have the visual aid upon study completion

Conclusions

• Readability Assessment: The written instruction reading grade level is too high.
  • Currently 8-9th grade while 18% of participants read at 7-8th grade
  • 15% of patients evaluated for participation were excluded due to language barriers, suggesting that a higher percentage reads below the 8-9th grade level

• Visual Aid RCT: The visual aid did not affect comprehension.
  • There is a need for improved patient education (majority unable to score ≥90%)
  • Marriage was the only characteristic associated with better scores
  • Visual aid may improve patient satisfaction
  • Limitations:
    • Exclusion of non-native English speakers
    • Participation bias
    • Knowledge of a comprehension assessment
    • Multiple choice format of comprehension assessment
  • Future studies:
    • Include non-native English speakers
    • Free response format of comprehension questions
    • Formally assess patient satisfaction

Public Health Implications

• There is a need for improved cesarean wound care education.
• Based on the REALM results, of the English speaking cesarean patients at TJUH, 18% read at a 7-8th grade reading level
• Information in medical charts and perceptions of care providers regarding a patient’s language may be misleading
• Incorporating a visual aid into the discharge education process may improve patient satisfaction and can be feasibly included

References