

Medicare Post Op Encouragement Statement

1. About 20% of the over 65 patients discharged are readmitted within 30 days. Why?
 - a. Medication issues. Taking too much pain medication and getting so constipated, delirious, or not breathing enough to the point that family brings them in.
 - b. Generalized frustration. Too many complex instructions, too much to remember, unwillingness to perform a whole series of daily activities in order to get well and stay well. So they give up and come in for adult supervision.
 - c. Pneumonia. Often from laying around and not being active.
 - d. DVT (deep venous thrombosis). Comes from laying around and not being active.
 - e. Frustrated caregiver/family. It's a lot of work to help an older patient get better after surgery. For any number of reasons, they can't/won't devote the time to help, so they bring the patient in for someone else to do it.
 - f. Expectations from past experience. The patient and family expect to be in the hospital for longer, so they come back after discharge to accomplish their wish.

2. Readmissions are bad. Why? Readmitted patients tend to just sit around the hospital and end up with a higher complication rate, slower recovery, and worse infections from dangerous hospital germs. Readmits are also expensive in a system that already is felt to spend too much. Also, the readmitted patient takes a bed (there are very few inpatient beds) that often is needed for another patient that can then have their surgery postponed, canceled, or transferred because there is no room at the Inn.

3. What is the solution? Several things are suggested:
 - a. Use your inpatient time wisely. You are going to be home within 24-48 hours of surgery. Spend your inpatient time learning the skills you will need at home, rather than just laying around watching TV and reading.
 - b. Have a realistic post op. You are going to need some help in the first few days and weeks after going home. Set that up! Shop for extra food that is simple to prepare. Arrange people to help with pets, trash, etc. And it is generally best to have a friend or family either in your house with you or checking in on you daily for the first couple weeks.
 - c. Have a real goal of weaning from the pain medications. Pain generally will not get you readmitted to the hospital or kill you, but those pain medications sure can. Accept some element of pain as a baseline and don't take the medications to the point of severe constipation, delirium, sleeping all day, being goofy, etc.
 - d. Follow your activity instructions. Walk 4 times a day for at least 10 minutes. Get out of the house! There is tremendous mental health value in showering, putting on real clothes and going and doing something as opposed to just sitting around the house in your jammies all day.