Warm Handoff

AHRQ
Guide to Improving Patient Safety in Primary Care Settings by Engaging Patients and Families
Kelly Smith, PhD
Scientific Director, Quality & Safety
Co-PI, AHRQ Guide to Improve Patient Safety in Primary Care Settings by Engaging Patients and Families

kelly.m.smith@medstar.net

No financial conflicts of interest to disclose.
Objectives

• Review the key threats to patient safety in primary care settings and interventions to engage patients and families to improve safety

• Describe the role and value of the Warm Handoff strategy in improving patient safety

• Identify strategies for implementing the Warm Handoff strategy in primary care settings
Guide – Project Goals

- Meaningful engagement with patients and families in ways that impact safety, not just quality
- Based on evidence
- Tools that are easy to use
- Tools for practices who have not done much in this area
Key Project Deliverables

- Environmental Scan
- Four Case Studies of Exemplar Practices
- Four Interventions to Improve Safety by PFE
- Final Guide
Key Threats & Promising Interventions

Threats to Patient Safety

- Breakdowns in communication
- Medication management
- Diagnosis and treatment
- Fragmentation and environment of care

Promising Interventions

- Shared Decisionmaking
- Patient and Family Advisory Councils (PFAC)
- Team-based Care
- Medication Management
- Family engagement in care
- Structured communication tools
Four Interventions

- Teach-Back
- Be Prepared to be Engaged
- Medication Management
- Warm Handoff
What is the Warm Handoff Strategy?

• Strategy to encourage bi (or tri) directional communication with patients, family members and the care team
• Moves conversations between healthcare team members in front of the patient
• A safety check!
Why Use the Warm Handoff Strategy?

• Communication breakdowns are a key threat to patient safety.
• Miscommunication and omissions can lead to medical errors and adverse events.
• Use warm handoffs to:
  – Increase patients’ understanding of the diagnosis and plan of care.
  – Engage all members in team-based care, including patients and families.
  – Validate and verify information exchanged.
  – Reduce breakdowns in communication.
When should a Warm Handoff be used?

- After rooming patients
- After the patient exam
- Anytime during transitions in care such as with the
  - Scheduler
  - Lab technician
  - Nurse educator
  - Other team members
Getting Started

Step 1
• Identify a Champion and get Leadership Buy-in

Step 2
• Develop processes for using Warm Handoff

Step 3
• Train team members and initiate implementation

Step 4
• Introduce the Warm Handoff to patients

Step 5
• Evaluate and refine

Implementation
Quick Start Guide
Warm Handoff

The Guide to Improving Patient Safety in Primary Care Settings by Engaging Patients and Families
Step 1. Leadership Buy-in

- Identify a Warm Handoff practice champion
- Obtain leadership buy-in and support
- Identify a process improvement team
  - Engage a patient or two in developing your plan
Step 2. Design Implementation

- Identify a team to help design processes for each of the Warm Handoff strategy tools
- Identify resources for implementation
Step 3. Orient Practice Staff

• Information about the Warm Handoff Strategy for:
  – Practice Staff
  – Clinicians

• Provide overview of resources available and how to use Warm Handoff to enhance engagement
A Warm Handoff in Action

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTL5ItGMUIQ&feature=youtu.be
Checklist for Staff

Checklist: Conducting a Warm Handoff

Present to the Clinician

☐ Reason for the visit.
☐ Patient visit goals and health concerns.
☐ Vital signs, BMI/weight, significant changes.
☐ Medication issues (e.g., refills, side effects).
☐ Updates on reports:
  ☐ Labs.
  ☐ Imaging.
  ☐ Specialist visits.
  ☐ Hospital discharge summary.

Engage the Patient

☐ What would you like to add?

• Checklist to help support adoption
• Guides the elements of the conversation between the Clinician and Practice Staff
• Asks the Patient to engage in the conversation
Clinician and Staff Handouts

Warm Handoffs
A Guide for Clinicians

What is a warm handoff?
A warm handoff is a handoff that is conducted in person, between two members of the health care team, in front of the patient (and family if present).

How do I conduct a warm handoff?
Whenever you need to share information about patient care, do it in person and in front of the patient.

You can both give and receive warm handoffs. For example:
- After your staff has roomed the patient, the staff member can use a warm handoff to present the patient to you.
- Your checklist is available to help with this.
- After you complete the clinical exam, you can use a warm handoff if additional patient services such as labs or immunizations are needed.
- You can use a warm handoff with extended care team members such as diabetes educators or pharmacists and with specialists.

Why is it important?
Communication breakdowns can result in medical errors. Warm handoffs can help address communication issues and:
- Engage patients and families and encourage them to ask questions.
- Allow patients to clarify or correct the information exchanged.
- Build relationships.
- Provide a safety check.

Warm Handoffs
A Guide for Staff

What is a warm handoff?
A warm handoff is a handoff that is conducted in person, between two members of the health care team, in front of the patient (and family if present).

How do I conduct a warm handoff?
Whenever you need to share information about patient care, do it in person and in front of the patient. That’s all there is to a warm handoff!

You can both give and receive warm handoffs. For example:
- After you room the patient, you can use a warm handoff to present the patient to the clinician. A checklist is available to help you with this.
- After the patient exam, you can receive a warm handoff from the clinician when the patient needs additional services like immunizations, labwork, or education materials.
- You can use a warm handoff with the scheduler, lab technician, or staff who assist with referrals.

Why is it important?
Warm handoffs can:
- Engage patients and families as team members.
- Allow patients to clarify or correct the information exchanged.
- Build relationships.
- Provide a safety check.
Step 4. Orient Patients

- Orient the patient to the Warm Handoff Strategy
  - Patient Fact Sheet
- Discuss why it is important
- Reinforce the need for patients to engage in discussions about their care
Step 5. Evaluate & Refine

- Observations
- Team debriefs
- Simple counts
How can the AHRQ PFE Guide help practices achieve success?

PTN PFE Performance Dashboard Domains

- Domain 1: Internal PFE Structure
- Domain 2: Spread to Practices
- Domain 3: PFE Success Stories
- Domain 4: Innovation

Practice Assessment Tool PFE Metrics

Metric 4: Practice can demonstrate that it encourages patients and families to collaborate in goal setting, decision making, and self-management.

Metric 5: Practice has a formal approach to obtaining patient and family feedback and incorporating this into the QI system, as well as the strategic and operational decisions made by the practice.
How Can I Get Started?

Step 1. PREPARE
- Identify practice champion.
- Assess readiness for change.
- Secure leadership support.

Step 2. PLAN
- Review strategies.
- Design implementation.
- Engage patients in planning.
- Select evaluation metrics.

Step 3. EDUCATE
- Inform every practice team member.
- Educate and train team members.

Step 4. INFORM
- Make patients aware.

Step 5. EVALUATE
- Recognize team’s efforts.
- Monitor impact.

Figure 1. Implementation Process
QUESTIONS?