

DISCHARGE OF A PATIENT - NOT JUST AN ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUE

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The pressures associated with the management of modern day hospitals may cause health professionals and hospitals to sometimes overlook the importance of the discharge of patients. It should not be forgotten that the discharge of the patient forms part of his or her treatment, and an important part at that.

On 10 December 2012 the Health Quality and Complaints Commission (HQCC) released its report entitled “Standards of care. A report on Queensland acute and day hospital self-assessed compliance with healthcare standards”. The report sets out what hospitals reported their performance to be in relation to the HQCC health care criteria for the 2012 financial year.

One of the more revealing findings in the report is that only one half of “...patients recovering from Type 1...” acute myocardial infarction (ie a heart attack) were provided with a discharge care plan which the HQCC recommended include the following:

- (a) Medications.
- (b) Chest pain action plan.
- (c) Referral to cardiac rehabilitation.
- (d) Lifestyle advice.

Queensland hospitals are faced with very real time constraints and pressures to discharge patients, so that beds may be free for the treatment of others. Hospitals must be careful not to allow the commercial and other pressures they have impact on the way in which patients are discharged, and where possible hospital discharge policies should be developed, or if already in place closely followed.

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