



# Can the use of a discharge leaflet reduce the stress and anxiety generated in families when discharged from PICU?

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## Background

It is well understood that discharging a patient from a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) can be extremely stressful for patients and their families. This can then make them feel vulnerable and unsupported. When conducting a literature review on this topic, it was found that most studies which had been reviewed were done on Adult Intensive Care and Neonatal Intensive Care Units. This indicated the need to study PICU discharges. Therefore, the aims of this study were:

- to determine whether discharging a patient from PICU causes stress and anxiety for our patients and families
- identify any common themes experienced by the patients and families
- understanding if discharge leaflets would prove to be beneficial to patients being discharged from PICU to help relieve these stressors.

## Methods

This was a mixed method study.

1. Literature Review
2. Interview with questionnaire.

Inclusion criteria –

- Patients & families who had been recently discharged from PICU
- Patients & families on PICU being discharged to Paediatric High Dependency Unit (PHDU) /Ward.

2 questionnaires were designed and discussed with families:

- Questionnaire 1: completed by patients who had been discharged from PICU
- Questionnaire 2: completed by those patients and families who remained in PICU but were being prepared for discharge.

## Results

The literature review, although greatly focused on AICU and NICU, identified the following common themes expressed by patients and their families, making what should be a positive experience a negative one:

lack of communication	feelings of lack of control
patient/family anxiety or embarrassment	discharging patients straight home because of poor patient flow and delayed discharges

The review also highlighted the following key themes to enable a smooth and caring transition from an intensive care unit to a ward.

Discharge education	Family engagement
Written communication	Treating the patient & family members as part of the team

With family and patient feedback during the interviews, a leaflet was developed to pilot with families

The interviews with questionnaires found that 70% of parents felt a form of written communication was crucial for an informed transition. 30% felt this form of communication may result in further anxieties and worries.

The common themes noted were all those listed in the literature review, but included complications with language barriers and discharges to different hospitals and knowing what to expect.



## Conclusions

Discharge from PICU is stressful for patients and their families. This project showed that, on discharge, a conversation with families along with a discharge leaflet would be extremely beneficial to relieve the anxiety and stress that is generated by any discharge from PICU to PHDU or to the ward.

## References

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