Improving weekend handover; a novel adaptation of an existing clinical handover tool

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Introduction: Handover is the vital system by which responsibility of patient care is transferred between healthcare professionals. Failures in the handover system can lead to preventable error, and therefore to improve patient outcomes, the identification and management of unstable and unwell patients should remain optimal and unambiguous. Standardised models for improving handover reduce preventable adverse events and medical errors.1,2

The Idea: The John Radcliffe Hospital runs a busy Acute General Medical unit across nine wards. Our project aimed to develop the current “weekend sticker” system to provide a structure on Friday ward rounds, which in turn would improve the written handover of jobs, weekend clinical responsibility and treatment escalation plan. This aimed to function as a tool to improve non-verbal handover.

Plan: A pre-intervention questionnaire was distributed to doctors of all grades between February and March.

Act: Following feedback from the stickers, the part regarding DNACPR decisions was removed. The stickers have now been rolled out across all the general medical wards.

Do: Following the results of the questionnaire, the existing weekend stickers were modified to include headings for weekend jobs and treatment escalation/ resuscitation decisions.

Study: A post-intervention questionnaire evaluated their impact on weekend handover and continuity of care.

Results:

**Before**

- **How many times over one weekend are you asked to see a patient for whom the plan is unclear?**
  - More than 5: 44.5%
- **How often does the Friday ward round plan include information regarding the weekend jobs?**
  - <50%: 22.5%
  - 50-74%: 22.5%
  - 75-99%: 22.5%
  - 100%: 5%

**After**

- **Do you feel the weekend plan is more clearly documented with the new Friday handover stickers?**
  - Yes: 99%
  - No: 1%
- **How often does the handover sticker include weekend jobs?**
  - <50%: 11.5%
  - 50-74%: 18%
  - 75-99%: 22.5%
  - 100%: 45%
- **How often does the handover sticker document the patient’s ceiling of care?**
  - <50%: 9%
  - 50-74%: 27%
  - 75-99%: 40.5%
  - 100%: 22.5%

Discussion: Effective weekend handover is facilitated by non-verbal, locally adapted improvements. This adaptation to a pre-existing clinical handover tool facilitated and assisted in weekend clinician’s decision making and clarifying management plans and is currently being used across all acute medical wards. 91% of users rated this non-verbal handover tool useful in clinical practice.

References: