Introduction:

Patient experience is a core component of quality. The Acute Medical Unit (AMU) is a busy and fast-changing environment and patients may be worried, scared and in pain. Understanding what is happening to them may alleviate some of these fears. We sought to evaluate patient experience on the AMU in Southmead Hospital: specifically what they understood of their hospital journey. Where gaps in understanding were identified we introduced change to enhance patient experience.

Methods:

• First we interviewed AMU nursing staff to identify the most common patient questions:
  1. Why am I here?
  2. How long will I be here?
  3. When will I see the Doctor?

• Next we asked these 3 questions of 87 different patients in the AMU, comparing their responses with the medical notes. We specifically assessed whether seeing an Acute Physician improved patients’ understanding.

• Having identified an area of concern, we introduced an information leaflet explaining the purpose and structure of the AMU and interviewed patients to assess its impact.

Introducing Change:

We designed a simple Patient information leaflet covering:

• FAQs When will I see a doctor? What is my diagnosis? Why do I have to move bed?

• A Who’s Who of AMU Colour-coded uniform key

• The AMU Journey

Results:

• Patients were well informed as to their diagnosis and estimated discharge date (EDD).

• However they were generally unaware of the typical pathway through the AMU: when they might see a doctor, why they were moving beds, when test results may come back and the role of the specialty teams.

• Seeing an acute medical consultant improved patient understanding in all 3 domains.

Summary:

1. Acute Physicians improve understanding
Patients are more likely to understand their diagnosis and their likely discharge date if they see an Acute Physician

2. AMU can be a confusing place
Many patients don’t understand the purpose/routine of an Acute Medical Unit

3. Information helps
A simple information leaflet can help this confusion.

The Challenge: How good is your AMU?

How many of your patients would know their diagnosis, their discharge date and when they can next expect to see a doctor?