

Lost in Transition: Challenges and Opportunities for Improving the Quality of Transitional Care

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Transitional care has been defined as a set of actions designed to ensure the coordination and continuity of health care as patients transfer between different locations or different levels of care in the same location. Transitional care, which primarily concerns the relatively brief time interval that begins with preparing a patient to leave one setting and concludes when the patient is received in the next setting, poses challenges that distinguish it from other types of care. Many transitions are unplanned, result from unanticipated medical problems, occur in “real time” during nights and

on weekends, involve clinicians who may not have an ongoing relationship with the patient, and happen so quickly that formal and informal support mechanisms cannot respond in a timely manner. This article describes the challenges involved in and potential solutions for improving the quality of transitional care.

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