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NICU Discharge Readiness

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Background
Following extended stays in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), families can be overwhelmed by discharge preparation and the transition to home.

Literature supports inadequate preparation for NICU discharge increases: family anxiety, risk for hospital readmission and emergency room visits, as well as infant care issues at home such as feeding difficulty.

This quality improvement project sought to improve and enhance discharge readiness in the NICU and to ensure families feel supported during their NICU journey and prepared for discharge well before the discharge day.

Action Items
Initiated Weekly Multidisciplinary Health Team Rounds
Developed a personalized discharge checklist
Created QR Codes for Parent Binder; Badge Backers for nurses

Initial Response to Action Items
Improved communication between multidisciplinary team
Identified need for additional reinforcement of staff education concerning importance of discharge education and documentation of discharge education
Identified need for improved communication between NICU and post-partum regarding discharge education and car seat education
Staff report personalized checklist as a valuable visual tool for families/caregivers and good conversation starter

Initial Steps
Identified committee members with twice monthly meetings
Evaluated existing discharge process, identified improvements
Reviewed the literature
Factors contributing to inadequate preparation for discharge:
Parents rushed on discharge day as teaching left until end
Poor communication of discharge plan between staff members
Uncertainty with the actual discharge date
Insufficient availability of education in evening and at night

AAP Guidelines NICU Discharge Education
Parental involvement; Individualized teaching plan
Checklist of knowledge and skills for parents to master
Ample time allowed to learn and return demonstration
Follow-up with parent/caregiver after discharge

What is Next?
Committee will measure length of stay, parent satisfaction and documentation of education to determine whether action items are successful
Continue evaluation of initiatives; make changes as needed

References