

A “Dear Patient” Post-operative Letter To Optimize Information Delivery To Patients

Mr Sourav Das (MRCOG), Miss Nishita Mehta (MRCOG), Miss Pritha Das Mahapatra (MRCOG), Mr Isaac Manyonda (FRCOG)
Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, St George’s University Hospital NHS FT

Objective

- Following major surgery, patients often complain that they were “never told anything about their operation” and they have no idea what actually happened, and what to expect in the recovery phase, the latter despite the patients being furnished with standard information leaflets.
- To resolve this, we devised an individualized “Dear Patient” letter whereby immediately following the operation a letter is written, addressed to the patient, and detailing, in lay language, the operation and the anticipated post-operative course. This letter is given to the patient once she is fully recovered from her anaesthesia. After successfully doing this for more than a year, we audited the impact on patients operated on over a time period of 4 months.
- Our objective of conducting this survey was to gain feedback on this leaflet with the aim of utilizing this information to improve the leaflet, and ultimately, patient care and satisfaction.

Design

Quality improvement project-
Telephone Patient Satisfaction Survey

Methodology

- All patients who had open major operations (hysterectomy or myomectomy) under our care during the 4 months period from September to December 2021 were contacted by telephone.
- 27 women gave verbal consent to participate in our survey, and each were asked 6 questions.
- The questions asked were-
 - Did you receive the leaflet?
 - When did you read it?
 - Was the information clear?
 - Was the information useful- on what scale 0-10 (10 being very useful)?
 - Any information that you did not like ?
 - Any other information you would like on the leaflet?

Example of a “Dear Patient” letter

Dear Ms

Date:.....

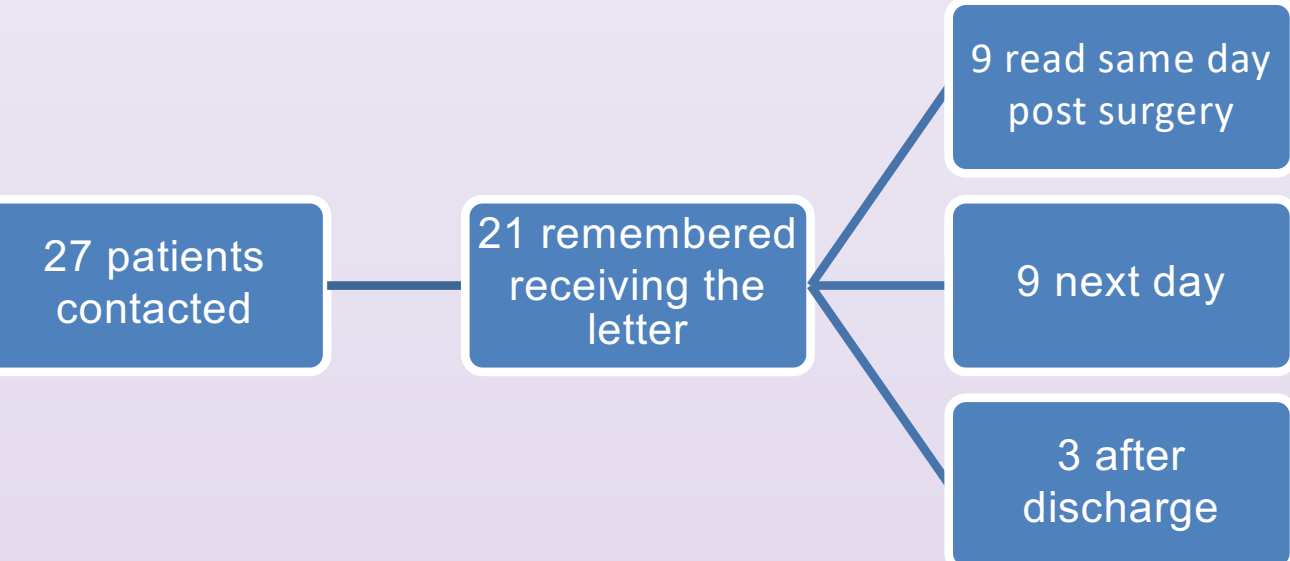
This is a short summary of the procedure which you had today.
Your surgery went well. After we put you to sleep (general anaesthesia) you had a hysteroscopy, which is a camera test and we looked inside your womb.
We found.....

After that we made a small cut just along the bikini line and entered your abdomen. We saw multiple fibroids on your womb. Both the ovaries and tubes were normal. We made an incision over the womb and removed(number)..... fibroids weighing gm.
During the procedure we had entered/ not entered the endometrial cavity.
After that we reconstructed your womb. Abdomen was closed in layers. You had a blood loss of around ml. We have left/ not left behind a uterine balloon inside your womb to keep both the walls separated which we will remove in 48 hours.
You would probably stay in hospital for 3 -4 days to make sure you are recovering well. We would again debrief you about the procedure and would try to answer any concerns which you may have.
Get well soon.

With best regards

Myoma Team

Results



10/10

• Found it useful and clear

0/10

• Found any information in the letter which they did not like

8.3/10

• Overall satisfaction score

Results

- Some suggestions for additional information were made such as number of fibroids removed, details on prevention / treatment for common postoperative symptoms such as pain and constipation (although these were in the standard information leaflets).
- Outside of this targeted survey we frequently receive from patients written and verbal communications expressing their appreciation of the “Dear Patient” letters.

Conclusion

- A simple innovation like this greatly improved patient satisfaction.
- Improving patient care through innovation and audits is an integral part of one's practice. Such Quality improvement projects help in enhancement of patient care from an individual to an institutional level.