



Every Step of the Way

Total joint replacement requires teamwork; underscores a unique career in nursing at Bryn Mawr Hospital

By Sharon Register, BSN, RN

Hip and knee replacements are common in today's hospitals. More than 500,000 men and women have joints replaced each year with otherwise healthy adults choosing this elective surgery so they can stay independent.

Today many hospitals are developing specialized programs focusing on needs and expectations above and beyond the clinical issues of this surgery to draw these patients to their facilities.

For example, Bryn Mawr Hospital (BMH), Bryn Mawr, PA, makes a promise to these patients: "We're with you every step of the way." From the moment patients decide to have joint replacement surgery through the postoperative and outpatient rehabilitation phases, they have a hospital liaison providing education, support and information.

As a result, patients are educated before surgery; and understand what will happen during the entire process. After hospitalization they are well-prepared for discharge.

Follow-up surveys show that beyond the clinical expertise of physicians and staff, patients appreciate the added amenities of the joint replacement program.

Simplify, Organize & Focus

In 2002, BMH adapted a model to streamline and organize efforts to form a joint replacement program that would give patients a higher quality of care more

efficiently. The plan included a dedicated unit, expanded patient education, group therapy, family involvement, patient amenities and standardization.

Long-term improvement strategies have been plentiful. Surgical and OR teams were dedicated to innovation and state of the art technology. Through simplification and standardization orthopedic OR suites to run more efficiently.

A postoperative unit dedicated to orthopedics, complete with a dedicated nursing staff and its own PT/OT gym, was included in a new 40-bed unit. Group physical therapy encourages and challenges patients to do their best while providing camaraderie during their stay.

In place is a model of care that demands clinical excellence and extensive patient education and family support through classes before and after surgery. There is even a written handbook. Amenities such as "Joint Club" tee shirts, "coach" buttons, group lunch and available hair stylists help patients relax and get back to normal more quickly.

The Team

Patient satisfaction is a high priority for Bryn Mawr Hospital, which strives to serve the public and achieve a dominant market share in the community.

Since joint replacement is elective, prospective patients have time to compare services and programs. At BMH, surgeons, OR, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, case management and our administrative and marketing personnel are all part of a cohesive high-performing group.

The team stays focused and updated through quarterly meetings with representatives from each department, as well as at less formal gatherings. Communication is crucial. The group discusses any adjustments that need to be made as well as sharing new technology and approaches to patient care and improved patient satisfaction.

That team includes the program manager. In simple terms, the job is to educate and become a liaison for each patient, ensuring a smooth transition from the day the surgery is scheduled to the end of rehab. The program manager, based in the marketing department, also coordinates information and resources among team members and patients.

How it Works

Often, patients first meet the total joint replacement (TJR) program manager as the educator of a community hip and knee pain class, gathering information about what might be the cause of their pain, possible treatment options and information on physicians who can provide diagnosis and treatment options.

After setting a date for surgery and receiving the total joint notebook from their surgeon with information, exercises, instructions and explanations, the TJR manager becomes a resource to patients via phone and/or email.

They meet again in preop class a few weeks before surgery. This 1-hour class helps to alleviate some of the patients' fear of the unknown, set expectations, encourage patients to consider what they will do after surgery (inpatient or home rehabilitation for example), clarify needs and answer questions.

Postoperatively, the TJR manager will see patients again the day after surgery to reconnect, provide hospital information and answer questions. On postop day 2 a lunch is provided for patients and "coaches," usually in groups following physical therapy class.

At this time, postop education is provided by the TJR manager, covering everything patients and families should expect and think about as they leave the hospital for home or to a rehabilitation facility.

An online survey, managed by the TJR manager and specific to the program, is sent to each patient about a month after surgery. This helps to continually evaluate patient satisfaction goals and discover areas for improvement.

The TJR plans a "Joint Club" reunion luncheon each fall, about a year after surgery for most patients, to celebrate their new lifestyle and reunite with their caregiving team and surgeons. They are encouraged to share stories of success at the luncheon.

Results in the Numbers

The Joint Replacement Program at Bryn Mawr has focused on patients' perceptions of care as it relates to patient satisfaction and their willingness to recommend the program to others. Through these efforts, patient satisfaction scores have reached above 92 percent in 2008. The team continues to listen to patients and consider their feedback and the program continues to grow. In 2008, it exceeded 1,100 hip and knee replacement patients, doubling its size since 2004.

The program is under the national average for infection and blood clotting, the two complications most associated with this type of surgery. Bryn Mawr's rate is below 1 percent; the national average is 4 percent. This is attributed to participation in the Surgical Care Improvement Project, which defines best practices for care of surgical patients. The joint replacement program has been a program participant for the past 2 years and in the Hospital Quality Incentive Demonstration (a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid program) for 4 years.

Year after year, Bryn Mawr Hospital has received recognition for its orthopedics program. Most recently, BMH was recognized in the *Philadelphia Magazine* Top Doctors issue as an Orthopedic Center of Excellence, and in January received the Joint Commission Disease-Specific Care Certification for Hip & Knee Joint Replacement.

Sharon Register is joint replacement program manager at Bryn Mawr Hospital, Bryn Mawr, PA.

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