



Transitional Care: The Role of Subacute Care in Healthcare

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DESCRIPTION

Subacute care is an essential component of the healthcare continuum, between acute hospital care and traditional long-term care. This form of care is designed for patients who are no longer in need of acute hospital care but still require a higher level of medical supervision and services than what is typically provided in a skilled nursing facility or at home. Subacute care, often referred to as transitional care, is a specialized level of healthcare that serves patients who have complex medical needs but are no longer in need of acute hospitalization. This type of care focuses on providing patients with intensive medical and rehabilitation services in a less restrictive and more cost-effective setting. Subacute care can take place in various healthcare settings, including dedicated subacute units within hospitals, Long-Term Acute Care Hospitals (LTACHs), and skilled nursing facilities. Subacute care services encompass a wide range of medical and rehabilitative treatments modified to the needs of individual patients. Patients with chronic respiratory conditions or those recovering from severe respiratory illnesses often require specialized care, including ventilator management and weaning.

Patients with complex wounds, such as pressure ulcers or post-surgical wounds, may receive advanced wound care in subacute settings to facilitate healing. Subacute care facilities offer intensive rehabilitation services, including physical and occupational therapy, to help patients regain their independence and functional abilities. Patients requiring ongoing IV medications, hydration, or parenteral nutrition can receive these treatments in a subacute care setting. Subacute care providers help manage pain for patients with chronic conditions or those recovering from surgeries. Patients who have suffered strokes, traumatic brain injuries, or other neurological conditions may receive specialized rehabilitation services to improve their cognitive and physical functioning. Subacute care is often more cost-effective than prolonged stays in acute care hospitals. It helps reduce the overall healthcare expenditure by transitioning patients to a lower-cost care setting while maintaining the quality of care. Subacute care facilities focus on comprehensive rehabilitation and recovery, reducing the likelihood of hospital readmissions. This helps provide acute care beds for patients who

need them the most. Subacute care is changed to meet the unique needs of each patient. This personalized approach ensures that patients receive the specific care and therapy required for their condition. Patients typically spend less time in subacute care compared to acute hospital stays, promoting a secure return to their homes and communities.

Subacute care helps patients regain their independence and improve their overall quality of life, even after facing serious medical issues. Subacute care focuses on rehabilitation and recovery, leading to better patient outcomes and higher chances of returning to independent living. By transitioning patients from acute care to subacute care, healthcare costs can be significantly reduced, benefiting both patients and payers. Subacute care facilities often have specialized medical teams and equipment to address the unique needs of patients with complex medical conditions. Patients in subacute care facilities enjoy a more comfortable and less restrictive environment compared to acute hospitals, which can aid in the healing process. Subacute care reduces the strain on acute care hospitals by providing beds for critically ill patients. Subacute care facilities typically encourage family involvement in the patient's care and recovery process, which can have positive psychological effects on patients. Subacute care facilities often struggle with reimbursement rates from government programs and private insurance companies, making it challenging to sustain quality care. There is a shortage of skilled healthcare professionals, such as nurses and therapists, trained to work in subacute care settings. Subacute care facilities must navigate complex and evolving regulations, which can be burdensome and costly to implement.

Allocating resources efficiently to meet the diverse needs of subacute care patients can be challenging, as patients may have varying levels of insight and require different services. Ensuring a smooth transition from acute care to subacute care and eventually to home or a lower level of care is a complex process that requires coordination and communication between healthcare providers. Subacute care facilities are expected to increasingly incorporate technology, such as telemedicine and electronic health records, to enhance patient care, monitor progress, and streamline operations. Healthcare systems are

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moving toward value-based care models, which may incentivize subacute care facilities to prioritize patient outcomes and cost-effectiveness. As technology advances and healthcare models evolve, some subacute care services may be delivered in patients' homes, allowing for a more comfortable and familiar environment during recovery. Subacute care providers may place a greater emphasis on preventative care to reduce the need for acute hospitalization and improve overall population health. Collaboration among healthcare providers, including physicians, nurses, therapists, and social workers, will become even more critical to provide holistic care to subacute patients.

CONCLUSION

Subacute care serves as a vital component of the healthcare system, offering specialized services to patients who no longer

require acute hospital care but still need intensive medical supervision and rehabilitation. It offers numerous benefits, including cost-effectiveness, improved patient outcomes, and reduced hospital congestion. However, it also faces challenges such as reimbursement issues and workforce shortages. The future of subacute care is likely to involve greater integration of technology, a focus on value-based care, and the potential expansion of home-based subacute care services. As healthcare systems continue to evolve, subacute care will remain a critical link in the chain of care, helping patients recover, regain independence, and ultimately improve their quality of life. It is imperative that healthcare providers, policymakers, and the industry as a whole work collaboratively to address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities in subacute care to ensure that patients receive the best possible care and outcomes.