

RACF Communication Envelope

(aka 'the yellow envelope')



The yellow envelope is a communication tool that assists staff of residential aged care facilities (RACFs) and hospitals to provide relevant medical information about patients transferred to and from hospital from RACFs.

How it works

The envelope design and size is a visual prompt to alert hospital staff that the patient is a resident of a RACF.

All relevant information about the patient can be found in the envelope upon admission to the Department of Emergency Medicine (DEM) or to the ward.

The envelope remains with the patient's chart throughout their hospital stay and its contents are updated by hospital staff upon discharge.

A supply of envelopes is kept at the hospital to assist with the discharge of residents new to RACFs.

The idea of the envelope is to prompt a more comprehensive discharge process and to act as a tool to collect all discharge information from all involved in the patient's hospital care and, for relevant information to be provided back to the patient's usual carer (RACF and GP) in a timely way.

Why a communication tool?

The lack of clear and relevant information about a patient's health and care status contributes to confusion, inadequate or inappropriate care, longer hospital stays and re-admissions.

A recent clinical audit of information received by Emergency Department and general ward staff at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital showed the quality of patient information provided by RACFs was poor.

(See *Improving RACF / Hospital Clinical Handovers* at www.gpartners.com.au/page/About_Us/Publications).

This person is a resident of an aged care facility.

RACF staff to complete this section of envelope checklist for transfer.

Patient name: _____
Facility name: _____ Wing / Unit: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____
 High care Low care Ageing in place
 Patient has summary on Health Record eXchange (HREX)

GP contact: _____ Address: _____
Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Phone call to hospital
Spoke to: _____
Time: _____

Completed transfer form, including:
- reason for presentation
- expectations of transfer
- usual functionality of patient
- usual observations
- contact telephone number for Residential Aged Care Facility
- contact telephone numbers for patients' GP and next of kin.

Advance Health Directive / End of Life Care Plan
 Yes
 No

Enduring Power of Attorney
 Yes
 No

Copy of patient's medication chart
 Yes
 No

24 hours of medication sent with patient
 Yes
 No

GP Health Summary / Comprehensive Medical Assessment
 Yes
 No

This envelope contains other pertinent information (i.e pathology, x-ray results)
 Yes
 No

Contact nurse: _____ Phone: _____

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The audit showed:

- a lack of consistency and relevance of information received
- unclear definition as to the reason for the current presentation
- unclear information about patient's usual care needs
- unknown cognitive, speech or mobility status
- missing GP contact details
- confusion about medication sent with the patient

The audit found that information sent back to RACFs from hospital was also inadequate, not timely and found:

- no timely discharge information
- unclear discharge diagnosis
- no continuation of care management details
- no/or unclear information about medication changes

This lack of communication causes confusion, particularly around issues relating to medication changes, and in some instances results in readmission.

The yellow envelope tool is designed to help prevent this.

The design

The C4 size yellow/gold envelope has checklists printed on both sides and a distinctive blue/green pattern on the front.

Printed on the front of the envelope is a checklist of information hospitals may need when the patient arrives at the DEM or is admitted to a ward, including patient, RACF and GP details.

RACF staff are responsible for preparing this information and the envelope when a patient is transferred to hospital.

Printed on the back of the envelope is a checklist of information required by RACF staff from the hospital upon discharge back to the facility.

Prompts are also included for hospital staff (e.g. 'GP contacted', 'Family contacted', 'Facility advised of patient return') to assist RACF staff once the patient arrives back at the facility.

Implementation

The yellow envelope was first introduced in the Redcliffe and Caboolture areas in June 2006 by the Moreton Bay General Practice Network.

Since then it has been introduced to public and private hospitals across northern Brisbane, and has the potential to be rolled out state-wide.

Evaluation to-date has shown improvement in the quality of information transferred from RACFs to hospitals however, hospitals have been slower to utilise the system fully.

Evaluation

RACF staff are encouraged to monitor envelope returns from hospital and provide feedback to hospitals when the system fails or is incomplete (either directly to the ward or via the adverse events process/complaints system of hospital).

GPpartners continues to provide training to all exposed to the yellow envelope, including:

- RACF nursing staff
- ambulance crews
- hospital nursing and medical staff
- hospital pharmacy and allied health staff
- hospital ward persons and transport staff .

Contact

Helen Hoare
Program Manager – Aged Care & Specialist Outpatient
Department Project
helen.hoare@gppartners.com.au
Phone 07 3630 7314
Fax 07 3630 7814