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Recovering from Critical Illness

What to expect on discharge to the ward

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you still remain concerned please contact our Complaints Manager on 01932 722612 or email complaints@asph.nhs.uk

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Attending the intensive care follow up clinic following discharge home

The Intensive Care Follow-Up Clinic offers the opportunity for patients and relatives to discuss any problems which have arisen in patient's recovery from critical illness following discharge from hospital. It also provides an opportunity for you and your relatives to give us any feedback on your stay in order to improve our services.

Patients who have spent more than five days in intensive care on a breathing machine will have an appointment sent to them automatically to attend a follow up clinic usually after six weeks post discharge home. The clinic will assess you and give you advice.

The clinic is able to refer you to any specialist for after care. Such specialist may include physiotherapists, dieticians, and psychologists. The follow up clinic is held on two afternoons every month.

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What to expect on discharge to the ward

Introduction

This pamphlet aims to give simple practical information to patients and their relatives who have been in Intensive Care. It explains what to expect when you return to the ward and then go home. It also gives you information on where to obtain help and support.

When you have been critically ill, it may take a while to get back to feeling your normal self. Exactly how long this will take will depend on things like the length of time you have been critically ill and the nature of your illness or surgery. Many patients make a full recovery and return to their normal life, although recovery can take many months or years if you have been critically ill for several weeks in Intensive Care.

Going to the Ward

Going to the ward is an important step forward and a sign that you are getting better.

Patients are usually transferred from Intensive Care when they are able to breathe on their own and no longer need the other specialist skills of the ICU team.

When leaving intensive care many patients have reported feelings of apprehension, anxiety and isolation. These feelings are quite common as you have got to know staff and the routine of care.

The routine of care will be different on the ward.

For example:

- Now you are getting better you will not require the nurses to take your observations so frequently
- The drugs may be administered to you at different times during the day
- If you are receiving feeding supplements this may be a different product with different packaging.

The staff on the ward are used to looking after people who have been critically ill. You will notice that there are fewer nurses on the ward for the number of patients compared to Intensive Care. This reflects that you are now ready to be more independent.

Doing more for yourself is a very important part of your recovery. Even if you cannot see the nurses all the time, as you could on the Intensive Care, they are still nearby.

You will have a call button if you need any help, which the nurses will answer as quickly as they can. Soon after your discharge you will be seen by nurses from intensive care, known as Critical Care Outreach staff to follow up your progress.

Being visited by the critical care outreach staff on the ward

The Critical Care Outreach staff will visit you soon after your discharge to assess your care needs and work with staff to ensure that your needs are met. This ensures that ward staff are aware of your specific care needs and are informed of the care you received in Intensive Care.

Outreach staff are doctors and nurses who will follow your progress on the ward, monitor your recovery, and assure good continuity of care. They will also give you the opportunity to talk about any concerns you have and can fill you in on any information that you would like to know regarding the nature of your illness, the treatment and care you received in Intensive Care.

Some patients who have been critically ill in intensive care for several weeks have reported that they feel it is helpful to talk through their experiences in Intensive Care. Some of these patients have reported experiencing some of the following issues on discharge to the ward.

These include:-

- No memory of intensive care and what happened
- Severe weakness and fatigue
- Joint stiffness
- Sleep disturbances
- Numbness in fingers and toes
- Changes in mood
- Changes in voice
- Weight loss
- Hallucinations and dreams that feel very real

If you have any of the above issues and if you would like to discuss these please do not hesitate to speak to the Critical Care Staff on their visit.