10 Steps to a Good Discharge Summary

From the perspective of GP, parents and families and the RCH

Discharge summaries are invaluable for continuity of care, safe transition between the hospital and community, and improved patient communication and education.

1. Plan for discharge at the time of admission and write as much of the discharge summary as possible at that time. Keep the parents involved in the discharge planning process.

2. Remember the ABC Rule: Accurate / Brief / Complete.

3. Include:
   - Weight
   - Relevant pathology/ radiology results (include pending results/ who to follow up)
   - Medication list (remember pharmacy can provide a list)
   - ACTION PLAN: OPD appointments, discharge destination, allied health input
   - Appropriate contact name/ number/ pager (consultant/ care manager)

4. Avoid:
   - Abbreviations (or define meaning on first use)

5. State EXACTLY what you would like the GP or community Paediatrician to do (follow-up care, further investigations etc). Consider phoning the GP or Paediatrician if the patient’s care has been complex or requires significant follow-up. Always call the GP or Paediatrician for significant events including death and major diagnosis. Calling the GP or Paediatrician of rural patients is especially important as they will often take over a large proportion of patient care.

6. Remember that your summary may be read by the parents / family. Always ensure any potentially sensitive content has been discussed with them first.

7. Make sure the GP’s name (and, if relevant, community Paediatrician’s name) is written on the discharge summary. If they do not have GP, ask the Ward Clerk to give them a ‘Find a GP’ fact sheet from Kids Health Info (www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo).

8. Send a copy of the discharge summary to the GP, the child’s usual Paediatrician, and other specialists/ allied health who have consulted during the admission. Also consider sending a copy to the doctor who treated the patient in the Emergency Department.

9. REMEMBER: a discharge summary is only as good as it’s TIMELINESS! Aim to have it ready for discharge, especially for rural/ inter-state patients.

10. REMEMBER: discharge summaries are also used for hospital funding; certain details for coding are important.

Please see the link to Discharge Summary Completion Policy

Checklist:
- Start planning on Admission
- Accurate
- Brief
- Complete
- Weight
- Relevant results
- Medication list
- Action plan
- RCH contact name and number / pager
- Abbreviations
- What you want the GP to do
- Need to call the GP/community paediatrician?
- Anything sensitive to discuss with parents?
- Child got a GP?
- Sent to all the right people?
- Complete on discharge / within one working day?
- Key information included for coding (hospital funding)?