Top Ten Things To Know
Increasing Participation in Cardiac Rehabilitation

1. Outpatient cardiac rehabilitation (CR) dramatically reduces morbidity and mortality by nearly 25%, yet utilization is alarmingly low, particularly among those in rural areas, with lower socioeconomic status, limited education, and advanced age and/or female.

2. Inpatient and home health care teams, specifically home-health nursing and physical therapy staff, can significantly improve CR referral and enrollment rates among eligible patients.

3. Whether a patient is referred to a program while in the hospital and if the patient finds value in CR determines their participation in an outpatient program.

4. A multidisciplinary team including nurses, clinical exercise physiologists (CEPs), physical therapists and registered dietitians should be involved in CR programs.

5. A PT’s role in determining whether a patient can be discharged from the hospital gives ample opportunity to provide a referral to outpatient CR.

6. Studies have shown confusion as to which member of the health care team is responsible for securing enrollment; this supports identifying a single member to be responsible for referral.

7. Frequently, a time gap exists between acute care discharge and initiation of CR, resulting in a perception that CR is a choice and not an expectation for a complete recovery.

8. To assess outpatient CR referral patterns, healthcare team members should be familiar with “AACVPR/ACCF/AHA 2010 update: Performance measures on cardiac rehabilitation for referral to cardiac rehabilitation/secondary prevention services” as well as the earlier version published in 2007.

9. The inpatient CR director should maintain a strong relationship with the medical staff, have a defined level of autonomy, supervision over personnel, and initiate conversations with any referring physicians regarding preferences for outpatient centers and opinions on patient follow-up.

10. Creating a CR referral system within inpatient and home health settings would allow greater knowledge about the program for both patients and providers.

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