
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Caregiver ID: A Valuable Tool to Engage Caregivers as Partners in Care during Covid-19 and Beyond

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Introduction

Caregivers are essential partners in patient care and play a critical role in providing physical and emotional support to family and friends across many care settings. This became even more evident during Covid-19 as visitor restrictions resulted in unintended consequences for patients and families. The Ontario Caregiver Organization introduced the Partners in Care Pandemic Toolkit to provide practical resources for organizations to welcome caregivers in a safe and meaningful way. At the heart of the toolkit is Caregiver ID – a visual way to demonstrate an organization's commitment to recognizing caregivers as partners in care.

Aims Objectives Theory or Methods

A caregiver identification card is a simple concept that can have a big impact on caregivers. The Change Foundation led the development of Caregiver ID along with its Changing CARE teams and caregivers through a co-design process. Launched in some Ontario hospitals before the pandemic, it became pivotal in the integration of caregivers as essential healthcare partners.

New benefits have emerged during Covid-19. Caregiver ID has been recognized as a key part of enabling caregiver presence. More importantly, it helps build a culture that engages caregivers as partners in care during the pandemic – and beyond.

Highlights or Results or Key Findings

Identifying the caregiver is an important step in establishing a relationship that can yield better care outcomes, better understanding of a patient, and better care experiences for patients, caregivers and staff.

Caregiver ID has also proven to be a valuable tool for safely welcoming the presence of caregivers during Covid-19. It helps to differentiate caregivers from general visitors and assures staff and patients that people have been screened and are permitted to be there. It can also help caregivers to feel more confident to ask questions and be active partners in care.

The Partners in Care Learning Collaborative, led by the Ontario Caregiver Organization enabled cross-sector learning that led to faster, higher quality implementation. Over the past year,

Caregiver ID has launched in more than 24 hospital and long term care sites across Ontario. Active engagement of caregivers has been instrumental in roll-out of these programs.

Conclusions

Caregiver ID, along with other resources in the toolkit, supports the culture of partnering with caregivers and empowers caregivers to participate as a part of the care team. Measurement of the program's impact has shown improvement in the patient, caregiver and provider experience.

Implications for applicability/transferability sustainability and limitations

Over the past year, Caregiver ID has evolved from its launch in hospital settings to long term care homes. Learning Collaborative participants have demonstrated a strong commitment to these tools as part of sustainable culture change, and there is growing interest in application across other care settings.