
Coaching Patients for Surgery Lowered Stays, Saved Money



Patients entering the hospital can often benefit if they prepare their mind and body beforehand. This can be achieved through minor adjustments to diet or mental health and could result in patients going home sooner and saving both hospitals and insurance companies significant amount of money.

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While in theory this concept seems quite logical, it is yet to be put into practice. As Michael Englesbe, MD., a University of Michigan transplant surgeon who has been a strong advocate of this idea points out, healthcare providers do get people ready for surgery but this prepping is mainly related to administrative tasks and not those which could potentially make a patient better, faster. He highlights the fact that if patients manage their status preoperatively, they would be able to bounce back much faster.

Dr. Englesbe and his colleague also confirmed this hunch a few months ago. A study, which was published in *Surgery*, also found that fitness and wellness coaching if administered in advance could reduce a surgical patient's average hospital stay by two days - down from seven days to five as compared to those who did not receive this coaching. This measure could also reduce medical costs by 30 percent.

"As a physician, you always tell people to quit smoking and exercise," says Dr. Englesbe, "but the compliance rates are notoriously abysmal." But the prospect of serious surgery can work as a change agent and can force people to change their lifestyle.

Study researchers are thus promoting the adoption of healthful habits in advance of an operation as it could play a crucial role in patient outcomes and recovery.

Dr. Wang also adds, "The condition of the body is so important. It's so much common sense that people often fail to recognize it."

This is the third time that Englesbe and Wang have examined this idea of athletic training applied to surgical preparation, a concept that they call "prehab". It could result in reduced hospitalisation times and cost savings.

Prehab would include improving one's diet, reducing stress, breathing exercises, smoking cessation and increased physical activity. The Michigan Surgical and Health Optimization Program (MSHOP) recommends that surgical patients should log 12 miles of walking per week, equivalent to approximately an hour a day. This can really be beneficial because walking aids blood flow and speeds healing.

MSHOP components not only boost physical healing but also provide emotional benefits days before the procedure and beyond. Dr. Englesbe believes that this could be an important tool to help patients get through the experience of surgery and feel more positive in the face of a typically negative event.

The MSHOP curriculum is now being offered in more than 20 hospitals and 30 practices across Michigan. But despite positive feedback and evidence of its benefits, the prehab programme is still used minimally and needs to be more widely implemented.

Source: [University of Michigan](#)

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