Steps provided for discharging patient from practice

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(HealthDay)—Certain steps should be taken when discharging a patient

for failure or inability to meet financial obligations, according to an article published in *Physicians Practice*.

Failure or inability to meet financial obligations is one of the most common reasons that a patient is discharged from a practice. Assuming every effort has been made to address a patient's ability to meet their obligations and remain in the practice and that discharging the patient will not violate payor contracts, the article provided steps for discharging patients.

A letter must be sent to the patient to advise them of their discharge; at least 30 days' notice should be provided. During the notice period, the practice should continue to offer emergency care and necessary treatment and to fill prescriptions; these rights should be included in the letter. As long as the letter is properly written, it can be from the physician or practice. An appropriate transfer of medical records must be conducted in accordance with state and federal laws, even if the patient is being discharged for financial reasons. Sharing information about local charities or providers who may charge less or accept different coverage can help patients feel less abandoned.

"Following the proper steps will protect both the physician and the practice and hopefully provide needed time for the patient to find alternative care," according to the report.

More information: Abstract/Full Text

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