

Improving Emergency Department Discharge Instruction Readability

Zachary Davidson, MD, Daniel Neren, MD
Hennepin Healthcare ♦ Minneapolis, Minnesota



Quality Issue

- Written discharge instructions are a key way that information about a patient's emergency visit, including test results, medications, follow-up and return precautions are shared with patients.
- Low health literacy may increase ED use, lead to longer hospitalizations, and increase costs.¹
- The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality recommends healthcare information be written at the 6th-8th grade level.
- In 2020, only 39% of emergency department providers wrote discharge instructions written adhering to these national guidelines.

Specific Aim

- The aim was to increase the number of ED discharge instructions meeting reading level national guidelines from 35% to over 50% over a 3-month period in 2020.

Tests of Change

- Provider education session about health literacy and discharge instructions at resident conference
- .EDDC discharge template created in EPIC
- Emails about discharge sent out to providers in Emergency Department
- Tip Cards with examples of best language posted in Team Centers throughout department
- Laminated D/C instruction tip cards and examples provided to residents and PAs in department

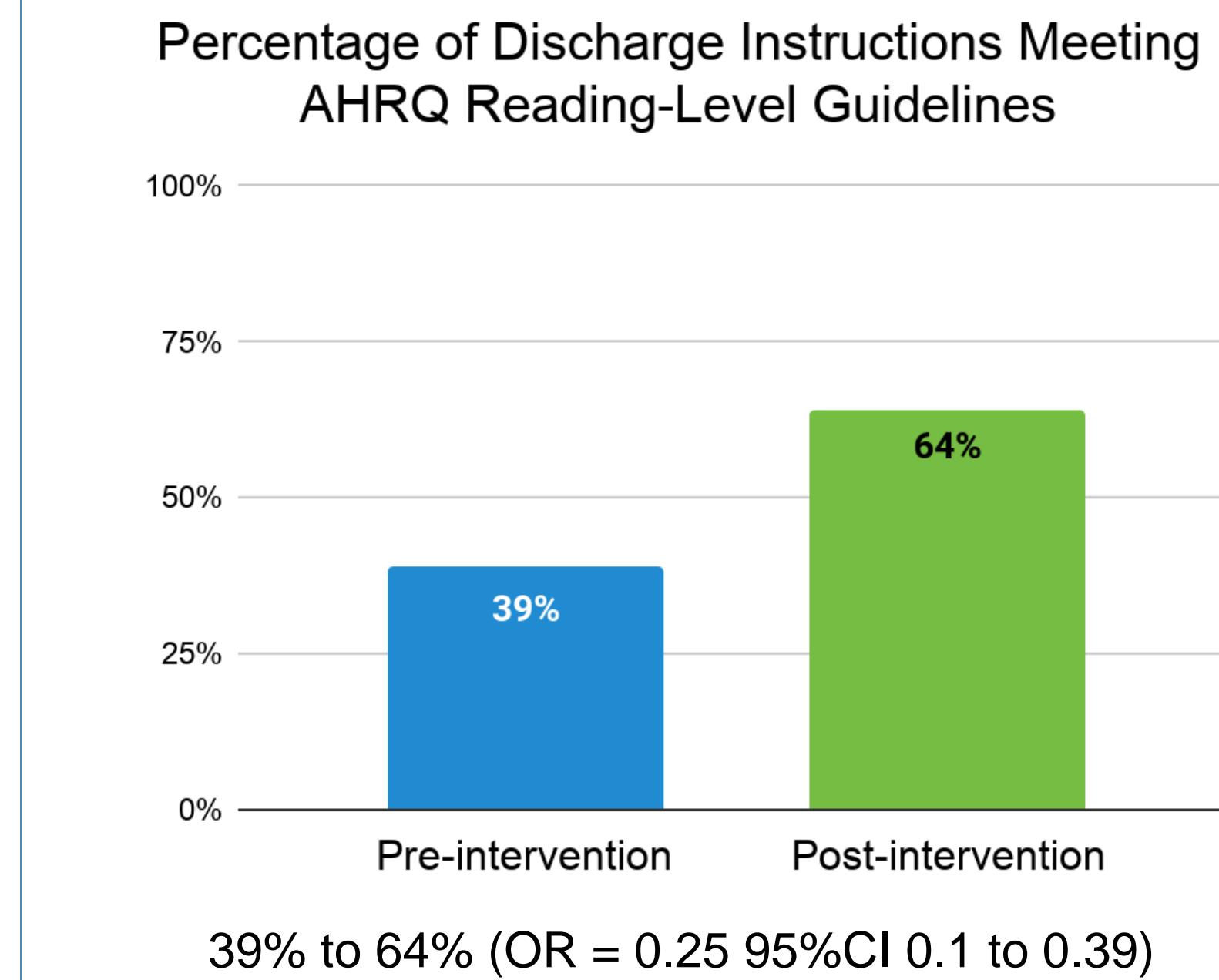
Measure of Improvement

- AVS instructions were measured by grade reading level according to Fleisch-Kincaid in for 91 unique sets of discharge instructions from a 4 day sample pre- and post-intervention.

Effects of Change

- Pre-intervention 39% of ED discharge instructions in sample met AHRQ guidelines of 6th-8th grade reading level
- Post-intervention 64% of ED discharge instructions met guidelines
- Median grade reading level of discharge instructions decreased from 9th to 8th from pre- and post-intervention.

Figure 1



Lessons Learned

- A simple, low-cost QI intervention led to a modest but significant decrease in the average grade reading of discharge instructions in our ED
- Looking for highly utilized areas like name-tag reference materials to reach resident providers when implementing changes in our academic ED setting
- After the intervention, a majority of discharge instructions met AHRQ guidelines for grade reading level