NEUROLOGY RESIDENCY PROGRAM
Patient Hand-off (Transition of Care) Policy
University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences (UNDSMHS)
Academic Year: 2025-2026
Revised July 1st, 2024

A. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define a safe process to convey important information about a patient's care when transferring responsibility from one physician to another.

B. Background

During patient care, it is often necessary to transfer responsibility for a patient's care from one physician to another. Hand-off refers to the orderly communication of essential information when transitions in the care of the patient are occurring. The information communicated during a hand-off must be accurate and sufficiently complete to ensure the continuation of safe and effective patient care.

C. Application

This policy applies to all residents in the UND Neurology residency program. Residents who do not comply with the policy are subject to the disciplinary policies of the residency program.

D. Policy

1. Hand-offs must follow a standardized approach and include the opportunity to ask and respond to questions.
2. A hand-off communicates essential information to facilitate continuity of care. A hand-off must occur when any patient experiences a transition of care. Examples of transitions of care include:
    a) The patient is assigned to a different physician within the facility, either temporarily (i.e., the physician will be off duty overnight) or permanently (i.e., the physician is rotating to a new clinical assignment); or
    b) The patient is discharged or transferred to another facility.

E. Procedures

1. Neurology
    a) End-of-shift Hand-offs
        i. Hand-offs will occur at the end of each shift. During weekdays, residents can sign out to the attending physician at 5:00 p.m. For weekends, resident's on-call will sign out to attending physician at 7:00 a.m.

ii. Hand-offs must include a written component (hand-off forms printed from EPIC are recommended) and a verbal component. The verbal hand-off will follow the EPIC sign out tool.
iii. The written component of the hand-off will occur within EPIC. Residents, attendings, and APPs seeing patients are responsible for updating the written hand-off daily within EPIC (from the main list, select "write hand-off"). The template for the written hand-off is entered via the dotphrase .NEUROSIGNOUT.

b. Off-Service Hand-Offs
    i. Hand-offs will occur at the end of each resident's rotation. Each resident leaving the service will hand-off to the resident replacing them at a mutually agreed time and place.
    ii. Hand-offs must include a written component and a verbal component. The written component will include an off-service note documented in the electronic medical record of each patient being handed-off and a printed patient list from EPIC. The verbal hand-off will follow the EPIC sign out tool for each patient.
c. Discharge Hand-offs
    i. The process for any patient being discharged from the hospital will include a hand-off to the physician who will be responsible for the patient's continuing care. It is the responsibility of the discharging physician to determine the identity of the physician who will be responsible for the patient's continuing care.
    ii. Hand-offs must include a written component (the discharge summary) and a verbal component. The discharging physician will arrange for a copy of the discharge summary to be sent to the physician who will be responsible for the discharge (or as soon as the physician who will be providing the patient's continuing care is available) and may be completed via a face-to-face conversation, or via a telephone call. When the physician who will be responsible for the patient's continuing care is practicing within the Sanford Health System, a note (flag) sent through the electronic medical record system may be used instead of the verbal component of the hand-off.