

## **Retrospection and Introspection: the Experience of Medical Social Workers in Reintegrating Patients into the Community**

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### **Introduction:**

Helping patients and caregivers to reintegrate from hospital into the community with respect and dignity is the mission of medical social workers (MSWs). With the pressing needs for community care, we believe our continuous reflections on practice will help strengthening our collaboration with medical and social sectors.

### **Purpose:**

This study aims at reflecting the experience of MSWs in facilitating patients and caregivers to reintegrate into the community

### **Materials and Methods:**

A focus group is conducted with 10 MSWs participated. It is audio-typed for thematic analysis.

### **Results:**

Three main themes are identified from the reflections on reintegrating patients and caregivers into the community, including a) roles of MSW, b) strengths, and c) challenges. MSWs perceive themselves more than merely a broker of community resources, but prepare patients and caregivers in various ways to reintegrate into the community. The context of illness provides an appropriate timing for MSWs to link patients with community support services. The close relationship with medical team members ensure the care planning can match with patients' physical condition, while the social work values, skills and knowledge in community resources ensure patients and caregivers' psychosocial needs be met. The rapid change of community support services, the different perceptions of community care, the ambiguous understanding of medical professionals on MSW roles, and the seamless connection with social service sectors become the great challenges of MSW.

### **Conclusion:**

Outcomes of the focus group are rewarding and inspiring. Our practice wisdom is consolidated, which helps to identify the key to successful intervention. Through acknowledging the strengths and challenges, MSWs are better prepared to promote holistic community care.