

PATIENT ENGAGEMENT

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Patient Engagement

- A growing body of evidence demonstrates that patients who are more actively involved in their health care experience better health outcomes and incur lower costs
- "Patient activation" refers to a patient's knowledge, skills, ability, and willingness to manage his or her own health and care.

Patient Engagement

- "Patient engagement" is a broader concept that combines patient activation with interventions designed to increase activation and promote positive patient behavior, such as obtaining preventive care or exercising regularly.
- Patient engagement is one strategy to achieve the "triple aim" of improved health outcomes, better patient care, and lower costs.

Patient Engagement

- Modern health care is complex, and many patients struggle to obtain, process, communicate, and understand even basic health information and services.
- Many patients lack health literacy, or a true understanding of their medical conditions.
- What's more, the US health care system often has seemed indifferent to patients' desires and needs.

Patient Engagement

- Many practitioners fail to provide the information that patients need to make the best decisions about their own care and treatment.
- And even when patients do receive detailed information, they can be overwhelmed or lack confidence in their own choices.
- Those with low levels of health literacy find it difficult to follow instructions on how to care for themselves or to adhere to treatment regimens, such as taking their medicines.

Patient Engagement

- 2001 Institute of Medicine report, *Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century*, called for reforms to achieve a "patient-centered" health care system.
- The report envisioned a system that provides care that is "respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values, and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions."
- Out of this recognition, in part, the field of patient engagement has emerged.

Shared Decision Making

- One strategy consistent with the first level of engagement...hared decision making, in which patients and providers together consider the patient's condition, treatment options, the medical evidence behind the treatment options, the benefits and risks of treatment, and patients' preferences, and then arrive at and execute a treatment plan.

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- For example, although **one patient** with knee pain may wish to have knee replacement surgery, **another** may worry about the risks that the surgery may not completely relieve pain or restore mobility and may choose to forgo it in favor of managing the pain with medication and weight loss.
- In such cases, **there are multiple, reasonable treatment options**, each with their own risks and benefits, and the "correct" path forward should be guided by a patient's unique needs and circumstances.

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Shared decision making involves several essential elements:

1. First, providers and patients must recognize that a decision is required.
2. Next, they must have at their disposal, and understand, the best available evidence.
3. Finally, they must incorporate the patient's preferences into treatment decisions.

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There are various modalities through which shared decision making can be conducted:

- **Decision aids** - leaflets, books, videos, websites, and other interactive media—gives information on risks and benefits of treatment options and helps patients choices that most reflects their personal values.
- **Develop Aids** - Informed Medical Decisions Foundation and Health Dialog have developed balanced, expert-reviewed decision materials.
- **Using these decision aids**, shared decision making can be conducted in person between providers and patients, or remotely.

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- Patients who received enhanced decision-making support ultimately had overall medical costs that were 5.3 percent lower than for those receiving only the usual support.
- They also had 12.5 percent fewer hospital admissions and 20.9 percent fewer preference-sensitive heart surgeries.
- The authors concluded that shared decision making through these relatively low-cost, remote models can extend the benefits of patient engagement to broad populations.

Patient Activation

- Many studies have shown that patients who are "activated"--that is, have the skills, ability, and willingness to manage their own health and health care--experience better health outcomes at lower costs compared to less activated patients.
- In an effort to quantify levels of patient engagement, Judith Hibbard of the University of Oregon has developed a "patient activation measure"--a validated survey that scores the degree to which someone sees himself or herself as a manager of his or her health and care.

Broader Patient Engagement

- Programs in which health care organizations structure themselves to meet patients' needs and preferences--and in which those preferences help to shape broader responses on a societal scale.
- An example is the Conversation Project and the Conversation Ready Project--two efforts to elicit patients' attitudes and choices about end-of-life care and predispose providers to give care consistent with those choices.

The Conversation Project



- A grassroots public campaign that encourages people to think about how they want to spend their last days and to have open and honest discussions with their families and health care providers.
- By having these important conversations before a crisis occurs, patients can consider and clearly communicate their wishes and forestall situations in which those decisions are made by others and not fully aware.

The Conversation Project

- Initiated by Maureen Bisognano, president and CEO, IHI, and IHI colleagues, is an effort to make certain that the nation's health systems and providers have the skills to elicit and receive patients' and families' views about end-of-life care, document them, and carry them out.
- Ten "pioneer" health care organizations working with the institute have committed to being "Conversation Ready" within one year--and to developing replicable and scalable models of change that others can adopt as well.

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- For example, one of the systems, Gundersen Lutheran, which is based in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, has created Respecting Choices--a 501(c)3 not for-profit aimed at engaging individuals in end of-life decision making.
- Among other actions, the health care system prompts all patients at the age of 55 to discuss their wishes with their primary care provider.

Patient Engagement

- Researchers have identified a number of common factors and obstacles that may need to be overcome to carry out effective patient engagement and activation strategies.
- Some are attributable to patients and their characteristics and proclivities and others to those of providers.

Factors Involving Patients

- For patients to engage effectively in shared decision making, they must have a certain degree of **health literacy**.
- the "**teach-back**" method, in which providers ask patients to explain back to them what the patients have learned, their own understanding of their condition, the options available to them, and their intentions to act on the information

Diverse Backgrounds

- A patient's degree of engagement may be affected by such factors as cultural differences, sex, age, and education, among others. As a result, specific competencies, such as language skills or an awareness and understanding of religious beliefs, may be required on the part of clinicians and delivery systems to effectively engage patients with diverse cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic status.

Cognitive Issues

- There are well-known limitations to human decision-making skills and the ability to maintain attention that serve as barriers to patient engagement. They argue that there may be better ways to influence patients' decision making, such as through "choice architecture," in which decisions to be made are structured so as to "nudge" a patient toward a particular choice.

(Note: how does this differ from manipulation?)

Aversion To Considering Costs

1. Most participants were unwilling to consider costs and generally resisted the less expensive inferior options.
2. The authors identified a number of factors that lead patients to ignore cost.
3. These factors include patients' preference for care they perceive to be the best, regardless of expense; an inclination to equate cost with quality; inexperience in considering trade-offs among cost and quality; disregard for costs borne by insurers or society as a whole; and the impulse to act in one's own self-interest even though resources are limited.

Factors Involving Providers

- They discovered three main barriers to implementing shared decision making: **overworked physicians, insufficient provider training, and clinical information systems** that failed to track patients throughout the decision-making process. The researchers note that payment reforms and incentives may be needed for shared decision making to take hold.

Concluding Observations



- Despite evidence that has been compiled to date of the importance of patient engagement, experts in the field agree that more research will be needed to determine best practices for engaging patients, as well as to more fully demonstrate the relationship of patient engagement to cost savings. In the meantime, considerable efforts are under way to hold health care organizations accountable for engaging patients.

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- For example, the National Committee for Quality Assurance, a nonprofit organization that tracks the quality of care provided by health plans and health care organizations, requires a variety of assessments to determine how actively patients are being engaged in their health and care.

Patient Engagement

- Organizations wishing to be certified as meeting requirements for patient-centered medical homes, for example, must undertake surveys of patients that ask about whether clinicians engage them in shared decision making or provide support for them to manage their conditions.

Patient Engagement



- But there is wide agreement that even more could be done to measure how and how well health care organizations engage patients, and help to realize individuals' full potential to maintain and improve their health.