

# Patient Engagement & Primary Care Physician: The Quest for the Holy Grail A Patient-Centered Strategy for Engaging Patients

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# Patient Engagement & Primary Care

- ▶ Getting patients more involved in their care is critical to redesigning healthcare, i.e., PC-MH, ACO and Meaningful use.
- ▶ The underlying premise is that by getting patients more involved, they will make more informed decisions resulting in better care and more affordable care.
- ▶ Greater engagement can lead to better patient outcomes and quality, lower utilization and cost, and increased satisfaction and loyalty.

# Patient Engagement & Primary Care

- ▶ Patient engagement remains a challenging and elusive goal for healthcare providers.
- ▶ Patient engagement has been called “the Achilles Heel of the PC-MH, and by extension a potential threat to ACOs and Meaningful use which depend on the success of PCMH.
- ▶ So what does patient engagement mean? Why is it so challenging?

# Patient Engagement & Primary Care

Webster's said a person is "engaged," when they are involved in doing something in which they have a great interest. To be engaged, patient must have the following:

- ▶ Provides sustained cognitive involvement – the subject must prompt sustained thinking.
- ▶ Is relevant and provides value – the subject must be perceived as relevant and offering value/utility.
- ▶ Affords a satisfying experience – the subject of one's attention must provide satisfaction, i.e., physically, intellectually or emotionally.

# Patient Engagement & Primary Care

- ▶ Engagement does not just happen.
- ▶ Occurs when a person with a strong interest in a subject encounters a person or object capable of satisfying their interest, e.g., possesses the “engaging traits” identified above.
- ▶ The Engagement Process:
  - ▶ Person has a strong interest in something – subject is found to be engaging – engagement likely to happen.
  - ▶ Person has a strong interest – subject is **not** found to be engaging – engagement not likely to happen.

# Patient Engagement & Primary Care

## Perspectives of Patient Engagement – Physicians

- ▶ Someone who is doing what they should be doing.
- ▶ Providers often equate patient engagement with patient compliance.
- ▶ An unengaged patient is someone who is not doing what they should be doing.
- ▶ Given medication non-compliance rates of 30-70%, from the provider's perspective, most patients are not as engaged as they should be.



# Patient Engagement & Primary Care

## Patient Engagement from Patient's Perspective

- ▶ Most patients consider themselves engaged
- ▶ 96% of patients say they wash their hands
- ▶ 90% say they watch what they eat

Most patients think they are engaged just not in the way providers think they should be.

# Why is patient engagement so hard?

Obstacles to most physicians effectively engaging their patients:

- ▶ Physicians and patients don't share the same perspective
- ▶ Physicians' lack of time during the visit
- ▶ The ways physicians communicate with their patients.



# Obstacle Number One Physicians and Patients Don't Share the Same Perspective

- ▶ The reasons for the office visit
- ▶ The severity of the patient's presenting concerns
- ▶ The cause of a patient's medical condition
- ▶ How to diagnose and treat the patient's condition
- ▶ The role of prescription medications
- ▶ The role of the patient in decision-making

# Obstacle Number One Physicians and Patients Don't Share the Same Perspective

## Reality Check

How “engaging” would you find an important conversation with someone who:

1. Does not seek to understand your opinion
2. Tries to impose their perspective on you
3. Does not attempt to resolve differences of opinion?

# Obstacle Number Two

## Physician Lack of Time During The Visit

The lack of time manifests itself in a variety of ways:

- ▶ Ignoring what the patient has to say
- ▶ Not having reviewed the patient's chart before the visit
- ▶ Interrupting the patient
- ▶ Failure to solicit and/or acknowledge the patient's input

## Obstacle Number Two Physician Lack of Time During The Visit

Patients believe that their physician's time is valuable and to their own detriment frequently hold back information they would have shared and questions they would have asked had there been more time.

# Obstacle Number Two

## Physician Lack of Time During The Visit

### Reality Check

How “engaging” would you find conversation with someone who:

1. Did not seem to know reasons for conversation
2. Did not appear “present” in the conversation
3. Ignored or dismissed information you attempt to share
4. Seemed in a hurry to leave?

# Obstacle Number Three Physician Communication With Patients

- ▶ Providers don't do good job of communicating.
- ▶ Poor communications link to
  - ▶ Suboptimal outcomes
  - ▶ Frequent medical errors
  - ▶ Malpractice claims
  - ▶ Patient non-compliance (adherence)
  - ▶ Lower patient satisfaction and loyalty

# Obstacle Number Three

## Physician Communication With Patients

- ▶ Communication failures due to not adopting a patient-centered style
- ▶ Physicians employ a physician-directed style, focusing on biomedical issues, e.g. “the disease a person has,” excluding psychosocial issues
- ▶ Physicians employ a paternalistic, physician-dominated talk time, closed-ended questions to keep patient answers brief and make most health decisions on the patient’s behalf.



# Obstacle Number Three

## Physician Communication With Patients

Patient-centered communication:

- ▶ Just the opposite
- ▶ Provider “understanding the person behind the disease”
- ▶ Understanding their health beliefs, concerns and expectations
- ▶ Open-ended questions, discussion of psychosocial as well as biomedical issues
- ▶ Share decision making
- ▶ Empathy and support
- ▶ More patient engagement, more questions, more information sharing, more physician-patient agreement
- ▶ Results in greater patient compliance.

# Obstacle Number Three

## Physician Communication With Patients

### Reality Check

How engaging would you find a conversation with someone who:

1. Dominates the conversation
2. Limits your ability to speak
3. Makes no effort to solicit your input
4. Seems to jump to conclusions without all the facts?

# What is the Solution?

- ▶ Physicians no more engaging today than 30 years ago.
- ▶ We are waking up to the benefits of getting patients more involved in their owned healthcare and how it is delivered.
- ▶ The path to patient engagement begins by improving the way physicians communicate with their patients.

# What is the Solution?

Physicians that have adopted a patient-centered communication style report greater patient engagement as evidenced by:

- ▶ More patient talk time
- ▶ More information sharing
- ▶ More information seeking via questions
- ▶ Greater involvement in self care
- ▶ Greater adherence
- ▶ Lower utilization and cost
- ▶ Better patient satisfaction

# What is the Solution?

## **“Engaging Traits” of physicians with strong patient-centered communication skills:**

- ▶ Able to tailor to individual patients' health beliefs, fears, experiences, expectations and preferences
- ▶ Patient able to tell their story
- ▶ Patient feels heard and understood
- ▶ Patients get to share their health priorities
- ▶ Patients made to feel like a productive member of the health team.

# What is the Solution?

**Patient-centered communications are cognitively involved:**

- ▶ Patients are called upon to make informed decisions
- ▶ Patients are called upon to prioritize things
- ▶ Patients are expected to be prepared for the visit
- ▶ Patients are asked their opinions

# What is the Solution?

## Patient-Centered Communication is Satisfying

- ▶ Patients feel heard and understood
- ▶ Patients feel like they are important
- ▶ Patients feel they are making a contribution
- ▶ Patient fears and concerns are addressed



# Important Takeaways

1. Ability to effectively engage patients in their own care is a fundamental requirement of Meaningful use, the Medical Home, and Accountable Care Organizations.
2. Primary care physicians need to address the following three obstacles in most practices including patient-centered Medical Homes:
  - ▶ Physicians and patients don't share the same perspective
  - ▶ Physician's lack of time during the visit
  - ▶ The way physicians communicate with patients.

# Important Takeaways

3. Physicians and patients have different perspectives defining engagement. Patients think they are engaged and physicians think they are not.
4. Patients that consult physicians are already engaged the nature and level of engagement is determined by the unique set of concerns, beliefs, experiences and expectations.

# Important Takeaways

5. Engagement is a two-sided affair. Engaged enough to make an appointment. Unless physician invites the patient to participate, solicits their perspective, and acknowledges that perspective, patient engagement is not likely to occur.
6. Physician role is not to try and force his or her perspective upon the patient. Role is to seek to understand the patient's health perspective, discuss where the patient's perspective may be on or off target and offer the patient access to interventions and tools to facilitate a deeper level of engagement.

# Important Takeaways

7. Ability of EMRs, Web Portals, SMS text Messaging, and online decision-support tools to engage patients, like the office visit, is dependent upon the degree to which they are perceived by patients as being:
  - ▶ Relevant and offer value/utility
  - ▶ Provides a satisfying user experience
  - ▶ Is cognitively involved but does not ask the patient to do more than they are willing/able to do.