



Core Competencies, Chapter 3

Self-Management: Support Consumer Health Literacy about Medications and Side Effects

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Definition and Why Supporting Medication Health Literacy is Important to Integrated Complex Care

Consumer health literacy about medications and drug side effects is an important predictor of health outcomes for our patients/clients in clinical settings. Low health literacy is also associated with poor clinical outcomes and adverse health behaviors in most chronic illnesses (such as depression, diabetes, coronary artery disease, hypertension, cancer and infectious disease). For the purposes of quality improvement and patient safety, it is important to focus on improved clinic workflows and patient education related to medication management.

Example

Medication Health Literacy was identified as an issue when a 63 year old woman experiencing symptoms of hypertension, asthma, obesity and depression the primary care professional is reviewing the medications he is prescribing. During patient education, he becomes aware that the patient/client may not be have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information needed to make appropriate health decisions about her medication. The primary care professional decides to use the “Teach-back” method. This method is one method of health literacy consisting of asking the patient/client to repeat back information. It is a chance to see how well the primary care professional explains the information. Once she understands the medications the primary care professional asks the complex care manager to create a Pill Card with her.

At future appointments, the patient was noted to be much more articulate in how she discussed her medications during appointments, and her blood tests improved as well. The primary care professional concluded that the “teach back” method is an effective way to support medication literacy during appointments.

Narrative Description

Limited health literacy is very common in complex patient populations and must be assessed when prescribing medications. Obtaining a complete medication history and providing medication counseling are key components in the medication management of patients with limited health literacy (see also Core Competency for Medication Reconciliation). Clinicians should also be aware that most printed handouts about medications are written at higher comprehension levels than many adults can read.

Health care providers and clinic leaders should develop and implement plans to improve effective communication about prescribed medications and relevant side effects. This approach has been shown to reduce medical errors, improve adherence to provider recommendations, and improve interpersonal communication and rapport between clients and providers.

We will review practical tips and resources related to helping patients/clients improve medication adherence (see also medication reconciliation section):

1. Consider medication adherence as a vital sign to be checked at each patient interaction
2. Use of non-adherence risk assessments (Brief Medication Questionnaire) <https://pharmacy.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/brief-medication-questionnaire-1-bmq-1.pdf>
3. Attention to patients at transitions of care
4. Reviewing prescription refill information to identify non-adherence

Available Resources

1. Medline: list of medications & side effects – <https://medlineplus.gov/druginformation.html>
2. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality Pharmacy Health Literacy - <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/quality-patient-safety/pharmhealthlit/index.html>
3. Advancing Mental Health Solutions Center - (for prescribers) - https://aims.uw.edu/sites/default/files/PsychotropicMedications_0.pdf

BHICCI Plan for Learning/Teaching/Coaching

- Clinic leadership, program planners, and medical directors READ above materials related to Health Literacy about Medications and their Side Effects (Medication Literacy), and discuss with the practice coach.
- Primary care professionals, clinicians, and clinic staff ATTEND In-Person Presentation or VIEW training on Medication Literacy.
- PARTICIPATE in follow up coaching by Jen Clancy Consulting team.

How will Competence in this area be Measured?

Following completion/verification of the above learning/teaching/coaching plan, each primary care professional/complex care manager will have the opportunity to practice his/her new skills under supervision.

Following this, the supervisor will rate the clinician’s competency in each of the following by:

1. Case discussion of 3 or more complex care patients/clients, or
2. Chart review of 5 or more patients/clients, or
3. Review of 3 Pill Charts, or other medication literacy materials written with patient/client.

COMPETENCY AREA	EVIDENCED BY	SUPERVISOR’S RATING
Clinician will share information with patient/client on medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of strengths that are specific and detailed enough to be usable to help individual understand information about medications • Motivational interviewing strategies are used to help Patient/client engage in discussion about medications 	1 2 3 4 5
Clinician knows how to access information on medications and side effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates knowledge of websites for information about medications • Communicates clearly with patients/client 	1 2 3 4 5
Effective Spoken Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates clearly with customers who do not speak English fluently • Explains wellness issues clearly and succinctly • Demonstrates a willingness to hear others out before reaching a decision • Builds strong working relationships with other internal departments 	1 2 3 4 5

*1= Excellent results with no need for prompting or support.
 3 = good results and/or required some prompting or support.
 5 = required much support and/or was unable to complete necessary skills.