A Conceptual Framework for Improved Patient-Physician Communication and Shared Decision Making

The Problem

How can we structure the patient-physician encounter so that patients and their advocates gain better understanding of medical information and become active partners in their care?

Problems with patient-physician communication include:

- One way communication from physician to patient limit shared decision making
- Lack of a step-wise plan and timeline leading to fragmented care, poor follow-up and patients' inability to readily communicate with their physicians
- Inability to access and appropriately utilize the latest information, especially in the era of personalized medicine, genetic testing, and emerging technologies and therapies

Aim/Goal

- Create two-way communication between patients and physicians to empower and enable the patients and their advocate(s) to make informed decisions
- Implement an interactive, stepwise care plan that can be readily accessed and acted upon by patients and all of their health care providers
- Educate physicians and patients in real time with latest information and its impact on an individual's care

The Team

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The Interventions

Conducted Phase I study implementing the TRUST Encounter tool

- Enrolled 108 patients and 7 attending level physicians in 5 sub specialties: Gastroenterology, Hematology / Oncology, Pulmonary, Rheumatology and General Medicine.
- Study. Implemented TRUST Encounter tool, a trifold document with a templated note, where the physician lists the problem and presenting symptoms, possible causes of the patient's symptoms in lay terms, recommended tests or treatments, the timeline for each step, how subsequent communication will occur, and the patients/family's thoughts or concerns.
- Pre and post-study measures. Surveyed patients about their general health and function, and their attitudes about communicating with their physicians.
- Physician Survey. Conducted qualitative interviews with physicians in the study to learn about their experiences with the TRUST Encounter and their perceptions on its impact on patient-doctor communication, workflow and satisfaction, as well as their perceived feasibility of expanding this initiative to other settings and institutions.

The Results

- Survey Response Rate: 97 patients, out of 108 patients who participated in the pilot study (89.8%) completed the pre-visit patient survey. 70 of the 108 patients (64.8%) completed the post-visit survey, and 55 patients completed both surveys.
- **94% of patients who completed surveys were satisfied with their physician using the TRUST encounter** as compared to 38% satisfaction with their prior physician visit.

Survey Questions	Yes, all of the time	Yes, some of the time	No
Do you feel that your problems and questions were adequately addressed at this visit?	66 (94.3%)	4 (5.7%)	0
Do you feel that your problems and questions were adequately addressed by your other physicians prior to this visit?	26 (37.7%)	28 (40.6%)	15 (21.7%)

- **97% of the patients who completed surveys found the TRUST document helpful and 69% of the patients shared the document with their family or friends.**

Survey Questions	Yes	No	Don't Know
Did your doctor provide you with a written summary of the plan to address your concerns?	62 (88.6%)	4 (5.7%)	4 (5.7%)
-- If Yes, did you find the summary helpful?	60 (96.8%)	0	2(3.2%)
-- If Yes, did you share the summary with others in your family or with your friends?	43 (69.4%)	19 (30.7%)	0

- Results from physician interviews indicate a generally high level of satisfaction with the TRUST encounter with 57.1% of participating physicians indicating that they were "very satisfied".

Lessons Learned

- Developing a stepwise care plan, the TRUST encounter form, and sharing it in writing with patients, is helpful and can improve satisfaction and communication.
- Implementing the TRUST encounter tool requires increased office time and needs to be integrated into work flow and the online medical record.

Next Steps

- Build web based and electronic communication version of passport to TRUST
- Create a step-wise individual patient management plan with timelines; a medical GPS equivalent that will serve as roadmap to receiving quality medical care.
- Conduct a randomized trial to test the electronic TRUST tool in patients across multiple sites and evaluate the impact of these interventions on health outcome measures.

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