



Understanding Cost of Care Conversations

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Discussion

Healthcare costs are increasing for patients. Little is understood about how patient-doctor communication influences overall costs for patients.

Analysis of interview transcripts provided positive feedback and insight about the “Five Questions” which will be used to improve this resource.

Results suggest that “Five Questions to Ask Your Doctor” is an effective resource to promote patient-doctor conversations about cost and self-advocacy among patients.

Introduction

Choosing Wisely Initiative

- Choosing Wisely is an initiative of the American Board of Internal Medicine (AIMB) Foundation in partnership with Consumer Reports to promote conversations between physicians and patients to avoid unnecessary tests, procedures, and medications.
- The Choosing Wisely Initiative developed the resource “Five Questions to Ask Your Doctor” to support patient engagement in cost conversations and empower patients to ask questions about what care is right for them (Consumer Reports, 2016).

5 QUESTIONS to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure

1. Do I really need this test or procedure?
2. What are the risks and side effects?
3. Are there simpler, safer options?
4. What happens if I don't do anything?
5. How much does it cost, and will my insurance pay for it?

Methods

Study Design

- Four focus groups were conducted in English and Spanish in rural and urban communities in Central California.
- In each focus group patients provided information about their individual healthcare costs, completed a scenarios survey, watched a patient/doctor interaction video, and responded to the “Five Questions”.

Participants

- Participants represented an ethnically, racially, and socioeconomically diverse sample (including those who are below the 400% Federal Poverty Level), and those who were between 30 and 64 years of age.

Data Collection and Analysis

- The focus groups were recorded and then transcribed.
- Analysis of the interview transcripts focused on the following:
 1. identifying overarching themes
 2. identifying ways to tailor messages to patients, and characterizing themes of preservation of trust during cost-of-care conversations.

Thematic Analysis Results



“By the time you get a referral, you’ve probably already died.”

“I don’t want to be at risk when I go to the doctor.”

“You have to be your biggest advocate. Cause you know the doctor doesn’t care if your bills go to collections.”

“I like it that you have the option of asking. But it also depends on the doctor. Some doctors will look at you and say, well you need it because I’m saying you need it.”

Themes

1. Trust the authority of doctor
2. Variable quality of care
3. Ask for other options
4. Unnecessary medications
5. Access to specialists
6. Limited time with doctor
7. Doctor-patient relationship
8. Self-advocacy

Conclusions, Implications and Suggestions

- Patient trust in the authority of their doctor was a common theme across participants reoccurring throughout the interview.
- It is recommended that future research on cost conversations explore these newly identified themes. More research needs to be done to determine effective strategies for reducing medically unnecessary tests, treatments and procedures.

References

Consumer Reports (2016) Choosing Wisely. <http://consumerhealthchoices.org/campaigns/choosingwisely/>
DiJulio B, Firth J, Brodie M. Kaiser Health Tracking Poll: October 2015: Kaiser Family Foundation; 2015.

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