

Title: Use of a Patient Communication Checklist is Associated with Improved Satisfaction Scores

Authors: Brian Carpenter^{1,2}, MD, SFHM, Marta Reviriego-Mendoza³, PhD, John Larkin³, MS, Len Usvyat³, PhD, Keri Barnett-Howell¹, MPH, Laki Gajic¹, RN, BSN; ¹Sound Physicians, Tacoma, WA, ²Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center, Rockville, MD, and ³Fresenius Medical Care North America, Waltham, MA

Objective: The magnitude and complexity of medical information can negatively impact the patients' healthcare literacy and satisfaction. We implemented a pilot that provided a checklist to patients with recommended questions to ask their doctor. The checklist was designed to help patients understand their clinical condition, promote clear communication, and empower patients to become active collaborators in their care. We assessed if use of the checklist was associated with better Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS) communication scores.

Methods: We investigated data from inpatients at one hospital unit that piloted the patient communication checklist from October 2016 to March 2017. Checklists were given to new patients by hospitalist nurses (HRNs) and included recommended daily questions to ask their hospitalist including, what condition lead to their hospitalization, what is being performed and what is their response to treatment and anticipated outcomes, what can the patient do to help with their treatment, and when/where will they be discharged. Quarterly hospitalist specific HCAHPS surveys communication scores were compared 6 months before (April to September of 2016) and after initiation of the pilot.

Key Findings: There were 184 patients who completed the HCAHPS survey doctor communication domain before and 221 after initiation of the pilot. We observed a 21% increase in mean HCAHPS scores for the doctor communication domain after provision of the checklist (59% vs 81%; $p < 0.01$). There was a 26% increase in mean HCAHPS scores in the subdomain of clear communication by the doctor after use of the checklist (56% vs 82%; $p < 0.01$). Higher HCAHPS scores in the subdomain of clear communication by doctors was positively correlated with the subdomain of clear communication by HRNs ($r = 0.672$).

Relevance: Our findings indicate that providing patients with a standardized and structured communication checklist to empower them to ask their physicians key questions increases HCAHPS satisfaction scores for both doctor and nursing communication.

Managerial Implications: These results are important for designing tools to empower patients to drive key areas of communication and gain better understanding of their condition, treatments, and expected outcomes to overall improve their satisfaction of care.