Teach-Back

The Challenge

Patients rarely share if they understand the information given to them during a visit. Even when directly asked, many patients will not mention when they have questions. Research shows clinicians underestimate patients' needs for information and overestimate their effective communication with patients. [1,2,3] Poor patient understanding can lead to poor treatment plan adherence, lack of follow-through, and sub-optimal health outcomes.

The Idea

One way to ensure patients understand information is to use the teach-back method. This low-cost, health literacy intervention involves the patient explaining new information in their own words to a care team member who assesses the explanation for comprehension. Teach-back is not a test, rather it is a strategy that enables any member of the care team to validate a patient's understanding of information. By improving health literacy through teach-back, care teams are also addressing cultural and linguistic differences which reduce health disparities.

Steps for Implementation

1. Obtain leadership support.
2. Identify a champion.
3. Train all care team members on the teach-back method.
4. Determine when and how teach-back will be used.
5. Let patients and families know that teach-back is being used and explain its importance.
6. Evaluate your process and outcomes for continuous improvement.

Tips for Success

- Start with one care team member, one patient and one topic area.
- Discuss the process with the larger team to share tips and successful approaches.
- Use a non-judgmental tone and simple terms or phrases.
- Use an interpreter if English is not their primary language.
- Use various learning tools to accompany your conversation (pictures, large print, videos) and ensure that materials are no higher than a fifth-grade reading level.
- Involve a family member, if needed.

Resources

[Teachback.org](#)

[Home - TeachBackTraining](#)

[Teach-Back: Intervention | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (ahrq.gov)](#)

> [AHRQ Implementation Quick Start Guide: Teach-back](#)
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> [Use the Teach-Back Method: Tool #5 | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)
>
> [The SHARE Approach—Using the Teach-Back Technique: A Reference Guide for Health Care Providers | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (ahrq.gov)](#)
>
> [Teach-back: Interactive Module Slides | Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality](#)

[Health literacy – Using teach-back via an interpreter - Centre for Culture, Ethnicity & Health](#)

[Health Coaching: Help Patients Take Charge of Their Health | Patient Care | AMA STEPS Forward | AMA Ed Hub](#)

Put new ideas to work in your community:

Teach-Back is just one of several care transition interventions highlighted in HQI's [Ideas That Work](#) series. To explore other strategies for strengthening care coordination activities in your community, check out our [YouTube Playlist](#) and the [HQIN Resource Center](#).

1. Hancock K, Clayton JM, Parker SM, et al. Discrepant perceptions about end-of-life communication: a systematic review. J Pain Symptom Manag 2007 Aug 31;34(2):190-200. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2006.11.009.
2. Coran JJ, Koropeckyj-Cox T, Arnold CL. Are physicians and patients in agreement? Exploring dyadic concordance. Health Educ Behav 2013;40(5):603-11. http://dx.doi. org/10.1177/1090198112473102.
3. Calkins DR, Davis RB, Reiley P, et al. Patient-physician communication at hospital discharge and patients' understanding of the post-discharge treatment plan. Arch Intern Med 1997 May 12;157(9):1026-30. http://dx.doi. org/10.1001/archinte.1997.00440300148014