Importance of Patient Education and Health Literacy

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October 2016
Objectives

• Define health literacy
• Understand the impact of health literacy
• Identify the importance of health literacy in your practice and your teaching of oral chemotherapy
• Role of the oncology nurse
What will you do today - for health?

- Healthy eating, physical activity
- Prevent illness, manage conditions
- Navigate the health care system
- Communicate with providers
- Promote health in your community
All health decisions and activities involve USING information

- Find
- Read
- Understand
- Evaluate
- Communicate
- Apply
Health literacy is the ability to access, understand, evaluate and communicate information as a way to promote, maintain and improve health in a variety of settings, across the life course.
Who Is Most at Risk?

- Older adults (over 65)
- People with limited education
- People who have low income or are unemployed
- People who came to Canada recently
- People with limited proficiency in English or French

Why does health literacy matter?
Health Literacy Impacts:

- Health outcomes
- Health care costs
- Patient experience
• Patients knowledge of the drugs is associated with adherence
• Effective or ineffective symptom management
• Safety and handling
Health literacy emerges from the interaction between a person and the health care system.

**Personal factors**
A person’s skills and abilities

**Health Literacy**

**System factors**
The system’s demands and expectations

Wizowski, Harper & Hutchings, 2014
Literacy and Essential Life Skills

- Literacy
- Communication
- Numeracy
- Problem solving
Adherence usually follows understanding
The patient’s experience
READABILITY IS ONLY ONE FACTOR TO CONSIDER...
Physical and Emotional State

What about my other medical issues?

Will I get better?

Who will drive me to my appointments?

Will my insurance cover my medication?

I can’t afford to pay for transit.

I’m tired and not sleeping well

Who will take care of my family?

I can’t afford to pay for transit.
• Providers’ communication skills
• Complexity of information
• Characteristics of the health care environment
• Expectations
Bevacizumab is approved to be used alone or with other drugs to treat GBM that has metastasized in pediatrics.

- Using jargon
- Speaking too fast
- Delivering too much information
Expectations of Patients

• Informed and engaged
• Responsible for their health
• Take an active role in their care
• Self-manage chronic conditions
• Work in partnership with providers and share decision-making
PATIENT PERSPECTIVE
What can we do to improve health literacy?
1. Create a patient-friendly environment
2. Focus on the main points
3. Slow down
4. Use plain language
5. Use reinforcement
6. Check understanding
Focus on the Main Points

• Limit to a few main points or ‘chunks’ of information at one time

• Prioritize what needs to be discussed
  – What is my health problem?
  – What do I need to do?
  – Why do I need to do this?

It’s safe to ask. Manitoba Institute for Patient Safety. www.safetoask.ca
What percent of the information we provide patients is forgotten immediately

- a) 30 to 40%
- b) 30 to 50%
- c) 40 to 60%
- d) 40 to 80%
Use plain or ‘clear’ language

• A way of speaking and writing that is easy for most people to understand
• Uses familiar, everyday language
• Has a friendly, conversational style and a positive tone

Communication designed for an audience. Focuses on what they NEED to know and do.
Familiar words

• **If everything is fine,** you will then go to the operating room.

• Your blood pressure and pulse will be closely **watched**.
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<td>difficult breathing</td>
<td>hard to breath</td>
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<td>treatment plan</td>
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6. Check for understanding

“Mouse”
The onus for clear communication is on YOU!

• Before patients leave, use the “Teach Back” method to confirm that they understand the key points and know what to do.

• This is not a test of the patient, but of how well YOU explained it.
Teach back

1. Teach ‘chunk’ to patient
2. Ask patient to teach back
3. Assess patient’s response
4. Confirm understanding
5. Clarify or re-teach

Schillinger at al, 2003 “Closing the loop”
Tools of the Trade

5 Steps to better health literacy:
- Speak slowly
- Teach back
- Encourage questions
- Plain language
- Show examples
✓ Improve patient experience
✓ Improve health outcomes
✓ Lower health care costs

Universal Precautions

- Clear communication
- Easy to read materials
- Patient-friendly environment
- Realistic expectations

Person’s skills and abilities

Health Literacy

Mitic & Rootman, 2012; AHRQ, 2011