Patient Engagement: Patients as Partners in Their Own Health Care

Nancy L. Falk, PhD, MBA, RN and Mary Jean Schumann, DNP, MBA, RN, CPNP

Nursing Alliance for Quality Care (NAQC)
The George Washington University, School of Nursing

Patient Engagement – A Critical Cornerstone of Patient Safety and Quality

Patient-Centered Care - Honors the whole person and family, respects individual values and choices, and ensures continuity of care. When care is patient-centered, patients will say, "They gave me exactly the help I want (and need) exactly when I want (and need) it." (Adapted from RWJF Aligning Forces for Quality, Transforming Care at the Bedside).

Engagement - "Actions individuals must take to obtain the greatest benefit from the health care services available to them." (Center for Advancing Health, 2010, p. 2).

Engagement behavior framework (EBF) - Provides a model with ten measurable expectations for an individual’s behavior (find safe, decent care, communicate with health care professionals, organize health care, pay for health care, make good treatment decisions, participate in treatment, promote health, get preventive health care, plan for the end of life, and seek health knowledge). These behaviors facilitate people seeking and utilizing safe care. They also guide an orientation toward patient-centeredness. (Gruman, Holmes-Rovner, French, Felfress, Sofer, Shaller, & Prager, 2010).


Patient Activation Measure (PAM) - A valid and highly reliable scale that reflects a developmental model of activation. In this model, there are four stages that a patient must take to be activated in their care. (Hibbard, Stockard, Mahoney, & Tusler, 2004).

1. Believing the patient role is important
2. Having the confidence, knowledge, and other resource necessary to take action
3. Actually taking action to maintain and improve one’s health
4. Staying the course even under stress

Patient Engagement – An NAQC Priority

Recognizing the primary importance of relationships between engaged patients and families and their providers of care, NAQC has established Guiding Principles for Patient Engagement:

1. There must be a dynamic partnership among patients, their families, and the providers of their health care, which at the same time respects the boundaries of privacy, competent decision making, and ethical behavior.
2. This relationship is grounded in confidentiality, where the patient defines the scope of the confidentiality. Patients are the best and ultimate source of information about their health status and retain the right to make their own decisions about care.
3. In this relationship, there are mutual responsibilities and accountabilities among the patient, the family, and the provider that make it effective.
4. Providers must recognize that the extent to which patients and family members are able to engage or choose to engage may vary greatly based on individual circumstances. Advocacy for patients who are unable to participate fully is a fundamental nursing role.
5. All encounters and transactions with the patient and family occur while respecting the boundaries that protect recipients of care as well as providers of that care.
6. Patient advocacy is the demonstration of how all of the components of the relationship fit together.
7. This relationship is grounded in an appreciation of patient’s rights and expands on the rights to include mutuality.
8. Mutuality includes sharing of information, creation of consensus, and shared decision making.
9. Health care literacy is essential for patient, family, and provider to understand the components of patient engagement. Providers must maintain awareness of the health care literacy level of the patient and family and respond accordingly. Acknowledgment and appreciation of diverse backgrounds is an essential part of the engagement process.

Future NAQC Patient Engagement Initiatives

- Develop national consensus based white paper describing nursing’s contribution to fostering improved patient and family engagement in health care decision making.
- Develop and implement strategies to improve the knowledge and skills of nurses in patient engagement.
- Provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and dissemination of information/knowledge on patient engagement and related topics (conferences, publishing, etc.).

References

American Nurses Association (2010). Nursing’s social policy statement: The essence of the profession. Silver Spring, MD.


NAQC Member Organizations

Contact Information

Dr. Nancy L. Falk, 202-994-4968, nfalk@gwu.edu
Dr. Mary Jean Schumann, 202-994-3484, mschuma7@gwu.edu
The George Washington University, School of Nursing
Nursing Alliance for Quality Care
www.NursingAQC.org