Teaching Strategies for the Promotion of EFFECTIVE PATIENT COMMUNICATION IN VULNERABLE WOMEN

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Background
Too often, patients leave health care encounters without the information they need to successfully manage their diagnosed conditions. This leads to mismanagement of conditions, additional provider visits and increased costs. More importantly, the lack of understanding oftentimes results in decreased patient satisfaction and poor health outcomes.

Purpose
Effective communication skills are an essential component in the ability to obtain necessary information regarding health conditions and treatment plans. Patients need to know what questions to ask and the confidence to ask those questions during clinical encounters. The purpose of this project was to educate patients through the use of written instruction and skills training about questions they could ask their health care providers to better understand their health.

Objectives
1. Increase self-reported knowledge of questions to ask during health care encounters in a population of vulnerable women.
2. Increase self-reported confidence in asking questions during health care encounters in a population of vulnerable women.

Population
Project participants were women in a recovery community providing residential transition and treatment for incarcerated women with co-occurring disorders.

Methods
IRB approval - January 15, 2015 – Vanderbilt University. Two individual sessions of 30 minutes in length were scheduled for each participant.

Session 1
- Completion of pre-intervention survey
- Completion of Medicine Wallet Card from Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
- Review of Ask Me 3 patient education program from National Patient Safety Foundation
- Role-play application of information to either a past or upcoming healthcare encounter

Session 2
- Completion of post-intervention survey
- Description of communication experiences with healthcare providers since first session

Ask Me 3
Health information is not clear at times. The Ask Me 3 program run by the National Patient Safety Foundation can help. The program gives you three questions to ask your health care provider during a health care visit, either for yourself or for a loved one. They are:
- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is it important for me to do this?

Asking questions can help you be an active member of your health care team.

For more information on Ask Me 3, please visit www.npsf.org/askme3

Outcomes
The effectiveness of the practice change was evaluated with a pre and post-intervention, self-report survey rating participants’ knowledge of questions to ask healthcare providers and self-perceived confidence in asking those questions. The survey was a self-developed, pen and paper, Likert scale tool. Given the small number of participants (n=13), pre and post-intervention scores were evaluated as comparative data. Project findings indicated self-reported increases in knowledge of questions and confidence in asking questions during health care encounters.

Pre/Post Intervention Survey
Question 1: I know what questions to ask to get information about my health

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Pre-Intervention</th>
<th>Post-Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
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Pre/Post Intervention Survey
Question 2: I feel confident about talking with my health care provider.

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Conclusion
The ability of patients to communicate effectively with health care providers has been associated with improved outcomes and increased patient satisfaction. At highest risk for lack of essential communication skills are vulnerable populations. This project confirms the value of teaching essential communication skills to vulnerable women.