

The Shared Decision Making Initiative

The Massachusetts General Hospital Shared Decision Making (SDM) program is based at the John D. Stoeckle Center for Primary Care Innovation at the MGH General Internal Medicine Unit and works in close collaboration with the Health Decision Sciences Center and the Maxwell & Eleanor Blum Patient and Family Learning Center. The objectives of the SDM program have been to disseminate shared decision making programs across MGH primary care practices; identify the resources for and barriers to use of decision aids; and gain feedback on the impact of the programs.

Since 2005, the team has had a program to promote shared decision making in the 15 MGH primary care practices that serve over 200,000 patients in Boston and the surrounding communities. The team's early work suggested that increasing the ease with which clinicians could provide materials to patients was a crucial first step in facilitating shared decision making and collaborative care. Early efforts focused on developing the necessary system support to allow primary care providers to prescribe shared decision making programs through the electronic medical record, thus allowing clinicians to order shared decision making resources in real time during a primary care visit.

The team developed a standard process for decision aid distribution, which includes the following steps:

- The provider determines during a patient visit that a patient is eligible for a shared decision making program and discusses the program with the patient;
- If the patient expresses interest, the provider "prescribes" a decision aid (DVD and/or booklet) through the electronic medical record;
- Staff from the hospital's Maxwell & Eleanor Blum Patient and Family Learning Center mails the ordered decision aid to the patient, along with a return mailer and an evaluation questionnaire; and
- A note is automatically created in the electronic medical record documenting that the program was sent.

The team distributes over 35 different decision aids sponsored by the Foundation for Informed Medical Decision Making, in the areas of cancer screening, diabetes, orthopedics, heart disease, depression, general health, prostate conditions and women's health, among others. Three of the most popular decision aids are available in Spanish.

Assessment is an ongoing part of the SDM program. For instance, after assessing the differences between providers who prescribed decision aids and those who did not, the team planned a number of interventions to support decision aid use. These interventions included increasing the familiarity of the providers with decision aid content through learning activities offering continuing medical education (CME) credit. Following very positive feedback to the CME course, the team plans to develop new course material to improve providers' skills in shared decision making.

In the past year, the team has launched a new initiative extending services to two MGH orthopedic practices. The team continues to explore additional collaborations with specialty practices at MGH, in such areas as vascular medicine, cardiology, and breast cancer. Following a successful pilot study within primary care, the team will continue to explore alternative methods for identifying patients eligible for programs, such as direct ordering by patients. The team will also enhance marketing of the SDM programs, using strategies such as informational brochures that can be placed in waiting rooms at MGH primary care sites.

Finally, in addition to provider education, the team has adopted educational efforts to reach patients directly. The team has begun working with some of the community health centers to host group viewing sessions of the decision aid programs. In addition, in collaboration with the Blum Center, the team has begun to offer a series of talks open to patients and families that feature experts in the field of shared decision making encouraging patients to take a more active role in their healthcare decision making.

For more information about this implementation project, please contact Christine Greipp, Health Education Research Coordinator, at cgreipp@partners.org.