

Communicating with beneficiaries and shared decision-making

ISSUE: The Commission has explored many issues aimed at increasing the availability of information on the cost and quality of health care services. To make this information useful to beneficiaries, we need information on how they learn about health issues and make decisions about their care. What strategies lead to consumers getting and using information about the effectiveness, or quality of health care organizations and services?

KEY POINTS: Research suggests that Medicare beneficiaries have lower levels of health literacy than the general adult population. Yet they must make many significant choices about their health care including choosing between health care organizations and treatment options. For this presentation, we discuss the literature on health literacy and how beneficiaries make decision about health care options.

We also report on the results from two site visits to Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and Massachusetts General Hospital. These two institutions are implementing models of shared decision-making aimed at providing patients with objective information so that they can arrive at treatment decisions with their physicians that reflects their individual values and preferences.

ACTION: Commissioners should discuss future directions for this research.

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