

Shared decision making and its implications for Medicare

ISSUE: The Commission has an interest in 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. We are exploring strategies that could lead to consumers getting and using information about the effectiveness and quality of health care organizations and services. This year, our focus is on shared decision making.

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 preference-sensitive treatment options. Some analysts have suggested that shared decision making can help beneficiaries understand their choices and express their preferences.

We report on our research on shared decision making, a process 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. We discuss the applicability of shared decision making to the Medicare population. We consider strategies that have been suggested to promote wider use of shared decision making.

ACTION: Commissioners should discuss strategies and future directions for this research.

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