

Patient engagement and health care disparities

ISSUE: The Commission has expressed interest in the use of shared decision-making to increase patient-centered care and reduce health care disparities.

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. Some analysts have suggested that patient activation programs and shared decision making, a process aimed at providing patients with objective information and eliciting their preferences about different options can improve health outcomes. They may also help reduce health care disparities for racial and ethnic minorities. Although data are limited, we report some suggestive findings.

We summarize findings on the use of patient activation and shared decision-making to reduce health care disparities.

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

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