

BeST Communication: Promoting Better, Safer Care through Clear Communication

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Motivation for the Study

- 2011 caregiver study in Green County
 - #1 challenge: “communicating with professional service providers”
- Caregivers’ health literacy impacts the health and healthcare of the person they are helping
 - Limited resources available targeting improving effective communication between health care professionals, patients and caregivers



How can we fill this health literacy gap?

- Informal caregivers of older adults are resources that can create more productive interactions with members of the health care team
 - [Chronic Care Model](#)
 - [Social Cognitive Theory](#)
- Objective: develop educational program to enhance informal caregivers’ health communication and health care visit management skills



Care Talks Program Goals

- Build skills for preparing for an office visit, including developing a list of concerns/questions
- Discuss what to do during and immediately following a provider encounter
- Describe the health care professional's (HCP) perspective and identify some of their barriers to effective communication
- Apply problem-solving strategies to several challenging communication situations.



The Care Talks Program

Three 2-hour sessions, one week apart; and one 2-hour booster session one month later

Session 1

- Trust Building/stories
- Barriers to HCP communication
- Preparing for an office visit

Session 2

- Guest physician
- Build skills – prep for, and maximizing time in, visit
- Model & Home practice

Session 3

- Effective Communication Skills/Strategies
- Asking key questions
- Problem solving approach
- Role play with feedback

Session 4 (Booster)

- Review strategies
- Challenging situations
- Community resources



Session 3 Care Talks Handout – Before, During, After an Appointment

Before the Appointment

1. Ask the person you help – “What do we want to talk about at this visit?”
Example: concerns, new medications, interactions, any changes from the last visit.
2. Write down the topics you would like to discuss and who will ask the questions.
Time saving tip: You may prefer to list in order of importance and make two copies, one for your doctor and one for you.
3. You can call ahead to:
 - See how long your appointment is and if you have time to discuss all your concerns or ask for more time.
 - Ask the doctor to bring up a sensitive topic you have concerns about to the person you help. Like memory issues or driving restrictions.

During the Appointment

1. Introduce yourself and explain your role to the doctor.
Example: “I’m Mary and I’m with, I help him with his medication and make sure he eats healthy.”
2. Establish agenda and priorities – Use “I” Messages and Set the Stage. Show your list of questions or topics you would like to cover.
Example: “Our main concerns today are... I would like to talk with you more about this... I’m hoping this will help to prevent future problems...”
3. Tell your story – Be prepared to tell what happened since your last visit.
Tip: Bring your notes, use your own words, do not use medical terms, and tell your story. Include embarrassing details if they are necessary. Be brief, if the doctor needs more information he will ask.
4. Listen and clarify next steps to understand.
Example: Use reflective listening, if unsure say “Help me understand...” or “Are you saying...”

After the Appointment

1. Review with the person you help what happened at the visit.
Example: “How do you think that went? Do you have any questions, we didn’t get to ask?”
2. Review what you need to do next.
Example: Did the person you help hear the same thing? Are you both in agreement of what your happen?”
Tip: Do this soon after your visit so your memory is fresh.
3. Begin recording new information for your next visit right away.
4. Follow up via email, MyChart, with a phone call, or another visit if questions come up.
Tip: The sooner you follow up with questions the faster the visit will be in the doctor’s mind too.



Primary Research Questions

Does the *Care Talks* program increase participants' ability to:

- negotiate role with the person they help?
- develop a list of concerns (agenda) to discuss with the "doctor" and share them?
- summarize what they heard and identify main points after a visit?
- use "I" statements and ways to resolve conflict with a "doctor"?



Timeline

August 2013 – February 2014: Pilot study funded and initial team meetings, including caregiver advisory group

March -April 2014: Revisions to program materials (manual, handouts, surveys, posters)

April/May 2014: First *Care Talks* program in Green County

June – August 2014: leader training and two additional program offerings at Monroe Clinic

August 2014 - present: Final follow-up telephonic interviews; data analysis ongoing



Care Talks: What have we learned so far?

- Recruitment
- Session length and content
- Booster session scenarios and benefit
- Preliminary data suggest that participants are more likely to:
 - prepare a list of questions/concerns for the doctor
 - ask questions about things they don't understand
 - introduce themselves and explain their role



Participant Testimonials

I just had a doctor's visit for my husband; we had to go in for his checkup. And I used the methods I learned in your program and it really really helped. Me and the doctor had a better understanding and it went better than before.

After the last class I did an emergency file. It made me feel a lot more relaxed knowing that anytime I go out the door I can just grab that and I have what I need. Which I probably wouldn't have done or had all that I needed if I didn't take the class.

First of all I learned to listen, I sometimes am thinking ahead of the person I'm listening to, and I'm trying to tone that back and just listen, then think. And learning how to frame questions, so I use my time and the doctor's time efficiently and effectively.

CARE TALKS
Better Care Through Better Communication
