Just how well do your patients think you’re listening?  
A compassionate care survey at Memorial Hospital

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Background

• Compassionate care is a key element of a successful doctor-patient relationship and has been correlated with patient satisfaction with providers.
• A recent study in the Journal of Research in Nursing found that recently hospitalized patients in the U.S. and Ireland both rate compassionate care as highly important to them.
• The study found a gap between how important Irish patients feel that compassionate care is and how highly they rated their providers’ performance.
• This gap represents an important opportunity to improve compassionate care behaviors. However, the study did not establish that a similar gap exists among patients in the U.S.
• Kaiser patients and providers at Memorial have not yet been surveyed to determine how well they believe compassionate care is being implemented at this facility.

Innovation Objective

• Our aim was to survey 30 patients and 7 hospitalists to assess which aspects of compassionate care are important to them and how successfully they feel that physicians are providing compassionate care.

Methods

• Six compassionate care behaviors were selected to be assessed by the survey.
  Each survey administered elicited:
  • A scale of 1-10 rating of how important each of six compassionate care principles is to the evaluator
  • A scale of 1-10 rating of how well the evaluator believes each of the six principles is being applied at Memorial.
  • Qualitative comments about compassionate care

Survey Results

Patient Characteristics  
(n = 30 surveyed patients)

Average Age = 70.6 ± 6.5 years old  
50 % female; 50% male
Average Number of Days in the Hospital = 2.8 ± 1.7

How do patients rate the importance of compassionate care and its implementation by physicians?

Express compassion, sensitivity, and concern for patient circumstances  
Consistently involve patients in decisions about their care
Take time to listen carefully to patients  
Show respect for patients and those close to them
Treat each patient as a person rather than a disease  
Give news in a compassionate and timely manner

How do providers rate the importance of compassionate care and their own implementation?

Express compassion, sensitivity, and concern for patient circumstances  
Consistently involve patients in decisions about their care
Take time to listen carefully to patients  
Show respect for patients and those close to them
Treat each patient as a person rather than a disease  
Give news in a compassionate and timely manner

Discussion

• Overall, both providers and patients rated the importance and implementation of compassionate care by physicians very highly.
• Patients rated the importance of “taking time to listen carefully to patients,” and “giving” news in a compassionate and timely manner significantly more highly than they rated their providers’ performance in those areas.
• Providers also reported a statistically significant difference between the importance and implementation of those two skills.

Next Steps

• Listening and timely delivery of news could be targets for future interventions.
• We delivered a list of evidence based strategies to improve perception of listening at a Kaiser faculty meeting
• Providing stools for physicians in the hospital rooms is a possible evidence-based intervention to improve listening

Reference


“I have been really grateful to my doctors for [compassionate care]. It’s hard being in the hospital and those things really help.”  
-Comment from patient about the survey-