Health Literate Care Model

Ann E Bancroft

Ferris State University

Abstract

The Care Model, formerly known as the Chronic Care Model, is a long standing model of care that implements six elements to create productive, efficient health care. Integration of health literacy tools within the Care Model creates the Health Literacy Care Model, bringing a new level of patient centered care to an already effective model of care. This paper will explain the Health Literacy Model of Care as well as strategies to teach health literacy awareness and interventions to health care providers and staff at organizations within Newaygo County.

Health Literate Care Model

Patient engagement in health care has been described as the “Blockbuster Drug of the Century” by Leonard Kish in 2012. In order for individuals to be engaged in health care, they must be able to access it and understand it on the level in which they function. The engagement, actions, and understanding of the patient in a health care setting is ultimately reliant upon health care provider-patient communication (Koh, Brach, Harris, & Parchman, 2013). In order to adequately communicate, the health care industry must integrate health literacy into a model of care. The Health Literate Care Model is an adaptation of the Care Model (formerly Chronic Care Model) in which hundreds of health care organizations set their standards of care (Koh, Brach, Harris, & Parchman, 2013).

# Model of Care

In accordance to the Care Model, a health care organization must structure its interactions with health care seekers in such a way that each interaction is productive and efficient (Coleman, Austin, Brach, & Wagner, 2009). The Care Model has several elements to guide the standards of care, including self-management support, decision support, delivery system design, clinical information systems, health care organization, and community resources. By integrating health literacy awareness with these concepts, the Health Literate Care Model can be a model of care that creates an attitude of patient centered care that allows the patient to be proactive in health care situations.

In an analysis between the Care Model and the Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2014) Koh et al (2013) delineated how the Toolkit can be used across all elements of the Care Model. In the health care organization, a team can be formed to assess the current state of practice in regards to understanding and supporting health literacy, create an atmosphere supportive of changes to assessment and communication, and to raise awareness of health literacy needs. In the self-management support and decision support elements, implementation of the teach-back method, designing easy to read material, information on clear, effective communication, and seeking patient feedback creates a feedback loop for continuous education not only of the patient but of the involved staff. In the delivery design element of the Care Model, patient follow-up, interactions, and cultural awareness will reveal whether the Health Literate Care Model is effective. Information systems can help link patients with non-medical support, medication resources, and literacy resources in the community by creating user-friendly interfaces. Information systems can also implement reminders to staff and patients of important communications, needs, or assessments. Community resources are key for continuity of care and ongoing support of the engaged patient. The Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit provides ideas and resources that assist providers with linking patients to community support and national support information.

# Education and Strategy

Education of the health care providers and staff within Newaygo County will begin with sharing the statistics of literacy rates and education levels within Newaygo County, as well as a definition of health literacy. This is in alignment with the health care organization element of the Health Literacy Care Model. Creation of a slide presentation that can easily be added to the health care organization’s intranet, in accordance with the information systems element of the Health Literacy Care Model, will present the information in an ongoing, engaging, and interesting manner for individuals unable to attend a face-to-face educational opportunity. Creation of visual tools that show a health care provider what it is to have information presented in a manner that is difficult to understand; for instance substituting key words with another language, presenting numerical information in non-standard numerals, or burying the vital information in the midst of two pages of unnecessary information. Another interactive method if conveying the importance of health literacy is inviting health care providers to share or reflect on anecdotal instances in which they were unconvinced that an individual understood the disease, the treatment, the process, the next step, any part of the health care experience, as well as how it felt to the provider. Was the provider frustrated? Condescending? Superior? Concerned? Were there sequelae to the misunderstanding that could have been prevented?

Reviewing the Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit and discussing how it can be implemented within the organization as well as within the providers’ daily interactions would provide perspective and tools to implement immediately. Of especial practicality are the tips for communication which include eye contact, slowing down, limiting content, repeating the important parts, involving the patient in the education, using graphics when possible, and communicating in a warm, non-judgmental manner (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2014). All of these teaching opportunities tie into the Care Model elements, with the exception of information services. The information services staff need to be brought into these education opportunities so that they can understand the need, generate ideas to simplify patient user-interfaces, and create and integrate graphics or pictorials into patient education documents.

**Conclusion**

The Health Care Literate Model builds upon the long established Care Model by integrating the Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit with the defining elements that support excellence and efficiency in a patient-health care encounter. Implementation of interactive education opportunities with health care organizations within Newaygo County will include information on current literacy levels, definitions of health literacy, examples of how literacy challenges appear, tools to assess literacy levels, and tips on effective communication. Information will be offered to be included in the lead care organization intranet for wider access and inclusion of information systems experts. Education pamphlets will be offered to remind health staff of the issue of health literacy and the tips to keep patients engaged.

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