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2023

Assessing Patient Preferences for Communication Companions in Primary Care

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Recommended Citation

Advant, Anika; Babb, Georgia; Kruglik, Christopher; Lamarre, Taylor; Vien, Peter; and Maclean, Charles D. MD, "Assessing Patient Preferences for Communication Companions in Primary Care" (2023). *UVM AHEC*. 7.

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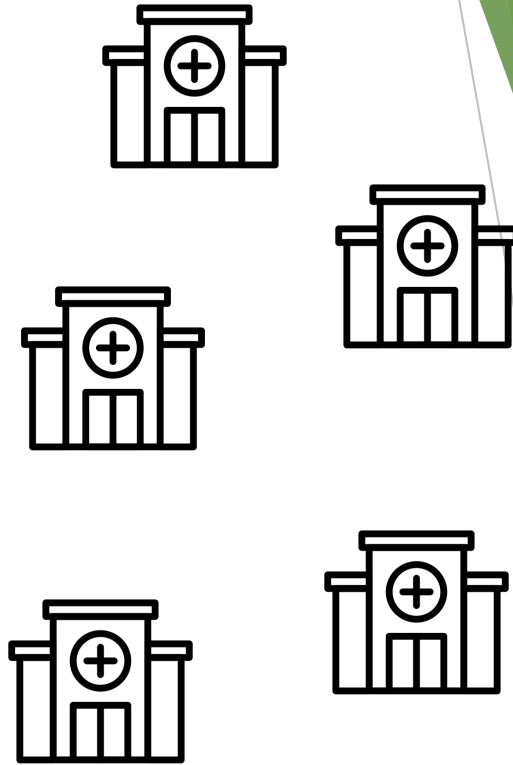
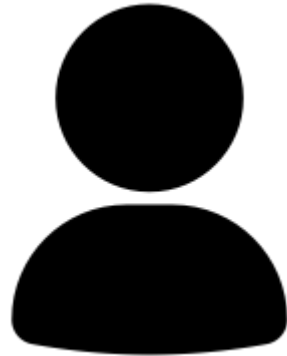
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Methods



Patient-Provider-Companion Survey:

- Checklist of options for roles companion can play during visit
- Options for how health information is communicated during and after the visit.

Given to all patients
 ≥ 18 years old
at check-in

5 Primary Care Practices
in Vermont

Data were collected anonymously and analyzed using descriptive statistics

Introduction/Background

- Patients with communication impairments may receive lower quality healthcare; their communication challenges often go undocumented
 - One study: 72% patients had no record of hearing loss in EMR prior to diagnosis [1]
- Communication companions may help, but effectiveness of this strategy and the roles of the companions remains unclear.
 - In a review of 5 reports: 3 inconclusive, 2 favored companion presence over unaccompanied patients with undefined companion roles [2]
- Question:
 - What are the preferred roles of communication companions?
 - What are possible strategies to enhance patient outcomes, especially for individuals with communication barriers?

Results

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Characteristic	Mean or proportion
Age in years, mean (SD)	55 (17.7)
Gender, % female	66%
Urban/rural, % urban	75%

*A **communication support person** is a family member, friend, or caregiver who helps you manage your medical information, your appointments, and any changes in your medical plan.*

*Did you bring a person to your visit today? **11%***

Table 2. Preferred role of companion

What role would you like your companion to play?	Proportion
Prompt or remind you to ask questions	68%
Help understand what doctor says or means	63%
Tell the doctor concerns directly	46%
Ask questions for you	42%
Sit back and take notes	26%
Allow you time alone with the doctor	21%

Table 3. Other ways to help stay up to date on your health

Strategy	Proportion
Help read the doctor's office notes through the EMR patient portal after the visit	77%
Participate throughout a visit via Zoom	23%
Participate <u>throughout</u> a visit via phone	21%
Participate <u>at the end of a visit</u> via phone to hear a visit summary	17%

Table 4. Recommendations for healthcare team

Strategy	Proportion
Repeat key takeaways	49%
Allow me time to summarize back what I have heard	46%
Avoid using medical jargon	24%
Allow me time to take notes	19%
Write down key words	8%
Use a clear mask	7%
Provide a hearing amplifier during the visit	4%
Other	31%

Table 5. Do you need help setting up your patient portal?

Yes	No	Not sure
6%	90%	4%

Discussion/Future Research

- Communication at healthcare visits is **especially important** for patients with communication disabilities
- The Patient-Provider-Companion Survey allowed us to **identify patient preferences** for companion roles, as well as preferences for communication of healthcare information
 - Roles include helping the patient understand information, as well as helping with being understood
- Further research might explore the **EMR portal** as a means of communication for patients with communication disabilities
- The Patient-Provider-Companion Survey may be useful to elicit patient preferences for delivery of healthcare information in **routine clinical care**

Acknowledgements

- *Supported by HRSA U77 HP03624 and the VT AHEC Scholars Program*
 - *Focus area: Medical Practice Transformation*