Coaching through Simulation to Improve Physician-Patient Communication

A Performance Improvement Project at Baystate Medical Center

MISSION

- Communication proficiency is a critical skill in the rising complexity of today’s healthcare world
- Higher patient satisfaction scores are linked to improved patient outcomes, improved adherence to clinical quality guidelines, and decreased readmission rates
- Communication proficiency is a critical component of these interactions

OBJECTIVE

Improve physician-patient interactions, the patient experience, and patient outcomes through utilization of a coaching model to engage physicians and enhance communication performance

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INTERVENTIONS

- Trained “Physician Communication Champions”
  - 7 Attending & 6 Resident MDs, 7 PFAC Simulated Patients
- Coached 130 physicians on critical communication skills using a standardized approach in the simulation center
  - 40 minute individualized physician coaching session
  - 1:1 feedback from MD & patient communication champions
- Creation standardized simulated patient encounter protocols for physician-patient communication behaviors
- Creation of standardized assessment tool for individualized physician communication coaching

RESULTS

Post-Simulation Coaching Survey:
- “Will this simulation improve your communication skills with your patients?” 87% said “Yes”
- “What behaviors will you alter as a result of this coaching session?”
  - “Make me aware communication is a skill, I should actively reflect on my encounters, think about what I did and what I can improve”
  - “Give patients an idea of the duration of medical tests, and anticipated duration of admission – I never thought about this”
  - “Explain to the patient what a hospitalist is, compare myself with their PCP for better understanding of our job in the hospital”

CONCLUSIONS

- Physician coaching on communication behaviors is an effective and engaging method of ensuring high performance
- Results suggest physician communication coaching improves patient satisfaction scores relating to physician domains of care