



## Which approaches encourage patients to become more engaged in their own health care?

### Takeaways:

- Patient engagement is a critical component of improving quality of care. It encompasses many elements, such as self-management and increased collaboration between patients and doctors.
- Increasing engagement involves patients choosing doctors, clinics and hospitals based on data-driven information about providers' ability to consistently deliver effective, high-quality care.
- The 2010 Affordable Care Act (ACA) requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to set national standards for collecting and reporting provider-performance data and to pilot interventions to support patient engagement.

### Overview

Patients have the power to transform the health care system by demanding better care. The more engaged patients are, the more likely they are to use information about quality to select a provider; seek and obtain preventive services such as health screenings and immunizations; adopt positive behaviors such as eating right, exercising,

monitoring health conditions; and, following treatment, actively asking questions of providers.<sup>1</sup> For these reasons, many experts believe health care delivery systems should focus more on patients.

### LEVELS OF PATIENT ENGAGEMENT

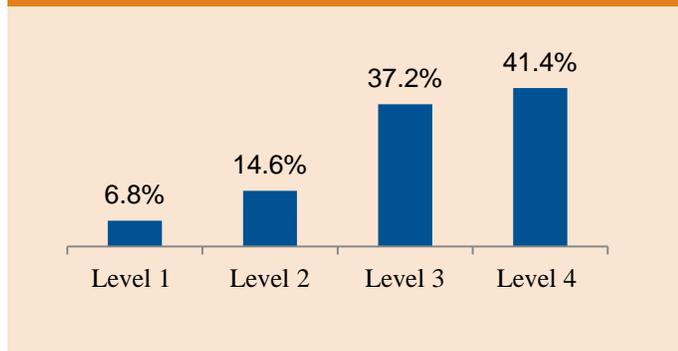
According to the Center for Studying Health System Change, patients vary considerably in how much attention they pay to their health and health care. Using a scale ranging from 1 (least) to 4 (most), researchers found that less than half of the population is at the highest level of engagement—meaning that they monitor their diet and exercise, seek out health information, get preventive screenings and follow doctors' orders. Even at this level, however, people still struggle to maintain healthy behaviors. Engagement levels are especially low for Medicaid enrollees, people with low incomes, less education, and poor health. Low levels are representative of people who tend to be passive with their health and feel they lack the knowledge or ability to manage it.<sup>1</sup>

### INCREASING PATIENT ENGAGEMENT

There are many ways to increase patient engagement in health care. Several more promising strategies follow.

- **Data comparing the performance of different providers** are available from many websites. These data help patients make informed decisions about where they want to receive care. Surveys have shown that, although use of performance data

### Level of Patient Engagement of U.S. Adults, 2007



Source: <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/101608.rb8.pdf> is not widespread, more patients are seeking out this information.<sup>2</sup>

Under the ACA, HHS will set standards for collecting and publicly reporting performance data. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) maintains a [directory](#) of groups around the country that compile this information.

- **Decision-making aids** help patients make informed choices about health care. Aids can take different forms such as printed brochures about illnesses and treatments or interactive, online tools. In a study of men considering prostate cancer screening, those who used decision-making aids scored highest on a prostate cancer knowledge test and faced less uncertainty when comparing clinical options. The ACA requires that HHS set standards to certify these aids as a method for improving quality.
- **Patient-centered medical homes** offer an alternative health care delivery model that puts responsibility for coordinating all of a patient's care in the hands of a primary care physician. Patient-centered medical homes encourage patients to be active participants in their care and promote regular contact between patients and primary care doctors. They also prompt providers to adopt more health information technology both to help providers keep track of patients, and to help patients stay involved in their care. More than

100 medical home pilots are under way, including several in RWJF's *Aligning Forces for Quality* communities. The ACA granted HHS authority to implement programs that support formation of medical homes. Projects initiated to date include the Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative and the Federally Qualified Health Center Advanced Primary Care Practice demonstration.

- **Care transitioning programs** help patients move from one health care setting to another—from the hospital to home, for example, or to a long-term care facility. Poorly coordinated transitions—when patients do not know specific care instructions, cannot follow treatment recommendations or are not ready to move to a new setting—are the primary cause of hospital readmission. Care transitioning programs offer patients support to manage their own care and avoid costly, usually avoidable readmissions. Under the ACA, HHS will work with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to implement the Community Based Care Transition Program, a pilot program that aims to reduce hospital readmissions by educating patients to manage their own health and health care.

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- [The Current and Future Role of Consumers in Making Treatment Decisions \(RWJF/Academy Health\)](#)
- [Implementing Patient-Centered Medical Home Pilot Projects: Lessons from AF4Q Communities \(RWJF\)](#)
- [Comparing Health Care Quality: A National Directory \(RWJF\)](#)
- [Medicare Federally Qualified Health Center Advanced Primary Care Practice Demonstration \(CMS\)](#)

<sup>1</sup><http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/101608.rb8.pdf>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.springerlink.com/content/e01145037j827h27/?p=3ab20e644d8b4f0b9c29611898606eab&pi=13>