Media Impact on Patient Empowerment in Complicated Medical Situations

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

This study measured the impact of an information system related empowerment process used in a gynecological clinic for patients scheduled to have a conization of the cervix. This procedure is an “excision of a cone-shaped or cylindrical wedge from the cervix uteri that includes the transformation zone and all or a portion of the endocervical canal.” (Nyirjesy 2015) A conization treats precancerous, uterine cervix lesions. The procedure is highly personal and often results in patients feeling inhibited about participation in healthcare decisions. This brief describes an application of information technology (IT) as a component of a broader study of patient empowerment. We specifically focused on two media types. One used a text format and the other, video technology on a mobile device. We intended to find methods to enhance communication during medical-related meetings to improve patient empowerment (Oh and Lee 2012).

We utilized expert-vetted informative material accessible in the physician’s waiting room. The study examined perceptual and behavioral differences between patients experiencing the text-based, conization pamphlet and a video-based, real conization procedure. We measured communication between physicians and patients during subsequent medical visits via a direct observation and encoding process. Later we measured empowerment. We used regression to test our first model and assess the value of information on a set of communication items. These results emerged: 1) patients exposed to the text-based pamphlet who felt the content was practical for their situation positively influenced the privacy behavior exhibited by the physician; 2) patients exposed to the video content that rated it as correct, positively influenced the request behavior of physicians. Other findings emerged when a second regression assessed the value of information on a set of empowerment items. The results suggested patients who found value in the pamphlet and believed that the information supported physician-supplied facts were more likely to be confident in their medical treatment. But, when patients evaluated the pamphlet’s information as strongly ‘understood’, then their confidence in the treatment decreased as did their self-esteem and feelings of social well-being.

Overall, this study suggested that medical information in complex situations may be difficult for patients to evaluate. Therefore, when it is similar to what their doctor has said, it helps improve empowerment. This can vary based on whether the patient has arrived for an initial visit to the clinic after consulting her primary physician, or if this is a follow-up visit or treatment with the same physician in the clinic. But, when a patient decides she fully understands the information given to her without requisite medical expertise, this can undermine the physicians’ recommendations and negatively impact treatment confidence. This further suggests that physicians’ guidance is important regarding important medical procedures. It appears that in complicated circumstances, either a pamphlet or a video utilizing cutting-edge IT in the waiting room is not sufficient.

References
