

Patient and Parent Emergency Department Expectations: A Feasibility Study

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BACKGROUND

- Patient and family-centered care has shown to be a critical component leading to the delivery of high-quality care^{1,2}.
- During an often chaotic time in the emergency department (ED), there are often communication barriers between the patient and provider³.
- In an effort to bridge this communication gap, research has been conducted to determine the value of obtaining written patient expectations prior to care in the ED.
- In the pediatric ED setting, studies have shown that obtaining parents' expectations leads to improved communication and overall satisfaction with care⁴.
- The most effective format and method for administering a patient-completed written expectations form remains unclear^{2,4,5}.
- The receptivity towards this patient-oriented communication strategy among health care providers is unknown.
- Further research is needed to determine the most appropriate and effective way to administer this type of questionnaire and to identify potential barriers for use by ED providers.

OBJECTIVE

- To gather pilot data to inform the design of an ED expectations tool
- To identify potential barriers and enablers for using the tool in the emergency department.



METHODS

Ten adults who visited an ED and ten caregivers who had visited the IWK ED, both within the past 6 months were invited to participate in this study. A 'think aloud' method was used, where participants were given a copy of the expectations questionnaire and asked to read each question and indicate what they thought the question was asking and how they would answer it.

Participants were then asked follow-up questions to determine:

- if the questionnaire was helpful
- if there are other questions we should ask
- if the questionnaire is in an appropriate format
- where/when this questionnaire should be given during the ED visit

We also conducted a focus group with 8 emergency department clinicians to identify potential barriers and facilitators for using a patient/parent expectations tool in practice.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Following the 'think-aloud' exercises with patient and caregiver participants, the questions on the expectations tool were revised to enhance clarity. The expectations tool currently consists of 6 questions regarding patient/caregiver expectations concerning their visit to the ED, written at a grade 6 reading level.

Clinician focus group data was analyzed, and 4 main themes were identified:

- 1) The tool may result in improved communication which may lead to improved patient satisfaction, more efficient use of diagnostics, decreased wait times, and less bounce backs
- 2) The tool must not increase clinician workload
- 3) Clarity of purpose of the tool is important as patient/caregivers may list off the tests/services they desire and then be dissatisfied with care if they do not receive them
- 4) Some patients/caregivers may have trouble completing the form due to language, literacy or cognitive impairment

Patient & Parent Emergency Department Expectations Questionnaire

1. During this visit to the emergency department, what are you most worried about?
2. Tell us what you think is causing your/your child's symptoms related to this visit?
3. What questions do you have that we can help answer?
4. All patients in the emergency department will get a careful physical exam and tests if needed. We want to hear what you think you may need so we can work with you to provide the best care possible. Check any of the boxes that say what you think is needed during your visit.

<input type="checkbox"/> talk with the doctor	<input type="checkbox"/> blood test	<input type="checkbox"/> note for missed work/school
<input type="checkbox"/> x-rays	<input type="checkbox"/> urine test	<input type="checkbox"/> a referral to a specialist
<input type="checkbox"/> stay in the hospital	<input type="checkbox"/> an IV	<input type="checkbox"/> unsure
<input type="checkbox"/> other _____		
5. Are you expecting any medication to be given in the emergency department? If yes, what type of medication are you expecting?
6. What information/resources do you think you will need to manage care at home?

DISCUSSION

The results of this project will provide a deeper understanding of the most efficient method of soliciting patient and caregiver worries, questions and expectations for care. Our integrated, knowledge translation approach has allowed us to develop a tool for patient/parents and clinicians to use, to better communicate and understand expectations. It is not clear if this tool will be generalizable across all patient presentations and ED settings. This tool will require future validity and reliability testing in a variety of different emergency practice settings.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the most effective format and method to administer an ED expectations questionnaire to patients/parents?

What are the potential perceived barriers for use of an ED expectations questionnaire?

References

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