

Informing Patients Your Practice Is Evidence-Based



EvidenceNOW
Advancing Heart Health in Primary Care

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In a national survey of adults, over 90 percent said that medical evidence was important or very important in their health care. Practices and patients benefit when patients and families know that recommendations for care are based on evidence. Patients who follow evidence-based recommendations usually have better health outcomes. Practices benefit from the added trust and engagement of patients, and increased confidence in the care they receive. This can lead to better adherence to preventive and treatment regimens and ultimately better quality outcomes and patient satisfaction scores for practices.

Language that Resonates

Most patients and families are not familiar with the language of research. To understand what language would resonate with the public, participants in the Evidence Communication Innovation Collaborative of the National Academy of Medicine's (NAM) Roundtable on Value & Science-Driven Health Care tested several messages about health care evidence.

Focus groups and interviews found the following phrases inspired confidence when talking about evidence.

- What is proven to work best
- The most up-to-date medical evidence, including information about the risks and benefits, about what works best
- Best practices in the medical field

Fewer people were confident about the phrases “what the research shows” and “guidelines developed by national medical experts about what works best.”

Putting Evidence in Context

NAM Collaborative members also established a framework for raising awareness about the role and importance of medical evidence in the context of the clinical encounter. Medical evidence, along with clinical expertise and patient and family preferences, is a critical aspect of medical decision making. When talking to patients about evidence or creating brochures or mission statements, practices may want to take into account the following framing language that resonated best with patients.

Making sure you get the best possible care starts with you and your health care provider making the best decision for you. Your provider can help you understand what types of care work best for your condition, based on medical evidence. Because there are always new treatments, providers use this evidence to keep up with which work best. Your provider's experience helps him or her evaluate and apply the evidence to your situation. The provider also needs to listen to you so he or she understands your values, preferences, and goals. This is important because every patient is different, and when there are options, it is important for the provider to know what is important to you.

The second-best framing language was:

When you and your health care provider sit down to talk about what tests or treatments to do, the conversation should involve the best medical evidence. But the research is constantly changing as we learn more, so the recommendations may change over time, too. As new treatments are developed, they are compared to the ones that exist today to determine if they're really better. This is all part of the process of continuously improving our health care choices.

Opportunities to Communicate about Evidence

Conversations

When talking to patients, help them understand that the focus is on them, and express that the goal is to provide patients with the best possible care. The following specific phrases are particularly effective.

- Making sure you get the best possible care starts with you and your health care provider making the best decision for you.
- Understand the best types of care based on the most recent medical evidence.
- Your health care provider needs to listen to you, understand your needs and concerns, and answer your questions.
- Every patient is different.

Practice Mission Statements

Many practices put their mission on their websites or practice brochures. Below are some examples of how practice mission statements can convey that the practice pays attention to evidence and why this matters.

Our Mission

[Practice Name] is committed to using the most up-to-date medical evidence to make sure our patients get the best possible care.

To achieve our mission, we:

- Put patients at the center of everything we do, recognizing that every patient is different.
- Ensure and demonstrate the highest quality of care by embracing continuous improvement, learning, and willingness to adopt best practices in the medical field.
- Commit to the professional development and growth of all team members so that they can keep up with what works best.

Our Core Values

- Respect for colleagues, staff, and patients
- Integrity
- Leadership involvement in the community
- Systems thinking
- Accountability
- Embracing/accepting change
- Maintaining the highest levels of medical skills

OUR MISSION

The [Clinic Name] provides comprehensive, accessible, quality patient-focused medical services in a caring, collaborative, and efficient environment.

OUR CORE VALUES

- **Caring for our patients.** We provide high quality care in a respectful and supportive environment. We are committed to providing you with information you can understand, listening to you, understanding your needs and concerns, and answering your questions.
- **Use most recent medical evidence.** Our practice of medicine is based on proven ways to prevent illness, restore health, and relieve suffering to make sure you get the best possible care.
- **Quality.** We use our resources and organize ourselves to exceed our patients' expectations by continually improving access to and the quality of our services.
- **Teamwork.** We work together collaboratively for our patients. We value the essential role of our clinicians and create processes that help them serve our patients. We value our staff as our most important resource and create a workplace that attracts and rewards caring and high-performing individuals.

For more information, see: Alston, C., L. Paget, G. C. Halvorson, B. Novelli, J. Guest, P. McCabe, K. Hoffman, C. Koepke, M. Simon, S. Sutton, S. Okun, P. Wicks, T. Udem, V. Rohrbach, and I. Von Kohorn. 2012. *Communicating with patients on health care evidence*. Discussion Paper, Institute of Medicine, Washington, DC. <https://nam.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/VSRT-Evidence.pdf>