



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS FOUNDATION

Better, Safer Care Through Clear Communication (BeST Communication) (G1502JG)

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Abstract

Objective: Our primary goal is to pilot test the effectiveness of a promising behavioral change program to improve communication between caregivers of older adults and healthcare professionals with a randomized wait-list controlled trial. We will evaluate a program developed and tested in 2014.

Background: Informal caregivers provide unpaid support to family and friends. There were approximately 34.2 million caregivers for adults age 50 or older in the United States in 2014. [1] Limited health literacy is associated with poorer health status, increased mortality, decreased use of preventive care services and increased frequency of Emergency Department visits and hospitalizations. [2] A key component of health literacy is understanding health information, but only 12% of American adults are proficient at understanding health information. [3] We are not aware of any evidence-based programs to improve communication between caregivers and healthcare professionals.

Methods: We will conduct a 2 year randomized, wait-list controlled longitudinal trial of a behavioral change educational program for improving healthcare system navigation skills and communication between caregivers of older adults and their healthcare professionals. We will enroll a convenience sample of 40 caregivers and 40 care recipients from 2 rural Wisconsin communities to conduct this trial. *Primary outcome:* Frequency of use of effective communication techniques. *Secondary outcome:* Frequency of Emergency Department (ED) visits.

Evaluation: Use of communication techniques will be measured by self-report and preliminary analysis of audio-recorded physician office visits. Frequency of ED visits will be self-reported at enrollment, shortly after the last workshop dates, 3 and 9 months later.

[1] Caregiving in the U.S. 2015. The National Alliance for Caregiving and the AARP Public Policy Institute. http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2015_CaregivingintheUS_Final-Report-June-4_WEB.pdf

[2] Berkman N, Sheridan S, Donahue K, Halpern D, Crotty K. "Low Health Literacy and Health Outcomes: An Updated Systematic Review." *Ann Intern Med.* 2011;155:97-107.

[3] Kutner M, Greenberg, E, Jin, Y, & Paulsen, C. The health literacy of America's adults: Results from the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics; 2006.