

Choices & Changes: Clinician Influence and Patient Action Workshop

The Program

Choices and Changes uses a workshop format to provide clinicians with an opportunity to explore their own beliefs about the change process and to test out these beliefs against the research evidence that has been gathered during the past twenty-five years. The program also provides the clinician with specific, brief and efficient communication strategies that can be utilized within the constraints of a typical office visit.

Choices and Changes can be offered in several formats depending upon the level of mastery that is desired. Physicians, nurses, physician assistants, diabetes educators, social workers, psychologists, pharmacists, addiction counselors, health educators and dieticians have attended the workshop. The program is designed for small groups of 6 to 25 participants.



Introduction

Clinicians frequently express frustration about their capacity to influence patient behaviour, especially when they see the negative impact of that behaviour on their patients' health outcomes. A patient's difficulty giving up smoking, following a diet, or sticking to a treatment plan often creates frustrations for both the clinician and the patient. Yet most clinicians realize that patient behaviour change and adherence to treatment is essential to producing positive health outcomes, especially in the setting of chronic illness. In an effort to better equip clinicians to influence patients' health behaviours, the Institute for Healthcare Communication developed Choices and Changes: Clinician Influence and Patient Action. Drawing upon the work of several behaviour change researchers, Choices and Changes is directed to the needs of clinicians working within the rigors of contemporary medical practice.

The Challenge

Historically, many clinicians had a rather limited view of their role in helping to change patients' health behaviours. Clinicians have generally been taught to simply provide information, give advice and prescribe treatments. We now know that many patients are not ready to commit to change and that merely prescribing medication or telling patients what they should do has limited impact on patient change in or adoption of health behaviours. We also know that, even when clinicians believe in the importance of counseling their patients to change health behaviours, they lack the confidence and skills to do this in a time-efficient manner. The challenge, then, is to provide the clinician with efficient and effective tools to help them to enhance patient health behaviour change and adherence to a treatment plan.

In the formal description of the necessary roles (CANMeds roles) for every physician (both from the College of Family Physicians of Canada as well as the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada), the "COMMUNICATOR" is identified as one essentially role/skill necessary for physicians.