As a practicing family physician for 18 years, I have seen the importance of patient-centered care in primary care. Prevention of disease and promotion of health is a main focus. I believe that patient behavior is a fundamental aspect of medicine. In primary care, preventing disease and promoting health is essential. This involves discussing the risks and benefits of medications, lifestyle changes, and other interventions. Knowing that group support can provide the foundation for significant change, I became interested in ways to improve patient engagement and decision-making.

The Power of the Group

Featured Study: Shared Medical Appointments and Pre-Diabetes

Dr. Aphrodite Papadakis discusses her experience with Shared Medical Appointments (SMAs) and pre-diabetes care. In a recent study, she and her colleagues evaluated the effectiveness of SMAs in improving patient outcomes. The study was a prospective cohort study with a single location, and it included patients attending SMAs. The study assessed whether the quality of anticoagulation decisions can be improved by involving patients in informed decision making. Information was collected during medical encounters from physicians and patients, and data was recorded on a computer.

Physicians in our study were largely not engaging patients in informed decision making. Fewer than 20% of patients were engaged in the decision-making process. The majority of patients were not informed of the decision to be made, and they were not informed of the advantages and disadvantages of the alternative options. This highlights the need for improved communication and shared decision-making in primary care.

What factors go into informed decision making?

Physicians' comfort with discussing complex medical issues can inadvertently affect how they communicate with patients. Over the next year, we will be piloting a study to assess whether the quality of anticoagulation decisions can be improved by involving patients in informed decision making. Patients will be engaged in the decision of which type to take: warfarin or a direct oral anticoagulant (DOAC). These drug types have different risks and benefits, and patients need to be informed of these.

What does the future hold for anticoagulation?

The future looks promising for anticoagulation therapy. Innovations in technology and drug development are likely to improve patient outcomes and reduce complications. It is important to continue the research to understand how best to engage patients in the decision-making process.

References:

- In a traditional office setting, there are limitations to the type of care that can be provided. SMAs may be more effective in improving patient outcomes. The study in a suburban family health center showed that patients attending SMAs were more motivated than patients attending usual care. However, the study was limited by its retrospective design and single location.

The Center for Value Based Care Research (CVCR) conducts novel research on interventions that improve value in health care. The Center is led by Dr. Misra and serves as a valuable resource for researchers interested in improving care delivery and patient outcomes.