



**MEDLINE  
UNIVERSITY**

**LEADERSHIP:  
PATIENT AND FAMILY  
EDUCATION**



## PATIENT AND FAMILY EDUCATION

Patients and their families are just as much a part of the healthcare team as physicians, nurses, and other personnel who interact with the patient. Therefore, patient and family education is a vital component of effective health care. When a patient receives targeted clinical education about their care, they can be more involved with their own care and monitoring. With this increased awareness, patient safety and satisfaction are improved, and anxiety can be decreased. Patient and family education can also help improve patient compliance with instructions from their healthcare providers.<sup>1</sup>

Pressure ulcers are a serious problem, and many patients are at risk. In fact, over 70% of pressure ulcers occur in those 70 years and older.<sup>2</sup> Pressure ulcers are also costly to treat and heal. CMS estimates that the cost to treat a pressure ulcer is more than \$40,000.<sup>3</sup> It is important to inform patients about pressure ulcers and the steps that are being taken to help minimize their risk.

### Outcomes

Improved patient and family education can lead to improved outcomes in some unexpected places. A recent study funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) showed that patients who received education were 30 percent less likely to be readmitted to the hospital.<sup>4</sup> Patient and family education has also been listed as a standard for accreditation by the Joint Commission.<sup>5</sup> Better outcomes for the patient mean better outcomes for the facility: This can result in cost savings, lower readmission rates, increased populations, and even improved facility image.

### Tools

This program provides your staff with the tools to improve communication and present education for the patient and family regarding pressure ulcers. We also provide a patient and family education pamphlet that explains what pressure ulcers are, how they form, risk factors, and some tips to help prevent them. This brochure encourages the patient to openly communicate any concerns to their healthcare providers.

### Talking to Patients about Their Care

Health literacy is defined as the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.<sup>6</sup> It is dependent on several factors, including the communication skills of both patient/resident and healthcare worker, culture, and knowledge of health topics. This means that patients/residents may not always understand the “clinical speak” of their care givers, which may affect how they follow treatment guidelines. When relaying prevention and treatment information to patients/residents, be sure to use simple and easy-to-understand terms; having patients/residents teach back the information they just heard is an effective way to ensure it was properly understood and offers opportunity to correct misunderstandings.

### Finding Time for Patient and Family Education

While the importance of patient and family education is clear, it can be difficult to fit into everyday nursing practice. This program reinforces for your nursing staff that every time they enter the patient’s room, they have an opportunity to not just connect with the patient, but also to educate them on their care. It is important that you as an administrator foster a work environment that embraces patient and family education. If the staff knows that their leadership supports and encourages open communication with patients and their families, they will be more likely to take the extra time for education.<sup>2</sup>



## References

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