

SHARED DECISION MAKING

Glyn Elwyn

What is it?

Shared decision making is an approach to communication in healthcare interactions that is defined by collaboration to support individuals to develop informed preferences, based on careful deliberation using high quality information (1).

Why is it helpful?

There is evidence to show that people who are informed and supported to take part in decisions act in their own interests and make choices which are more likely to be aligned with their personal preferences and longterm wishes. This is the basis of sound ethical practice and is likely to lead to less waste and harm (2).

When is it helpful?

Decisions need to be considered carefully when reasonable alternatives exist or when behaviour change may be helpful, as in managing long-term conditions. Shared decision making helps most when trade-offs exist about the risk of harms and benefits. These situations are very common in medicine (2).

How to do it?

Making decisions involves work, especially when facing unfamiliar choices such as comparing healthcare options. People often need time and resources to take part in decisions, as well as clear accessible information about options. Supporting individuals as they form preferences and consolidate decisions is an important step (2).

What might help you?

Reliable, accurate, accessible information about the likelihood of harms and benefits associated with health care options is hard to find. Knowledge tools, such as patient decision aids and icon arrays can summarize data to help compare options (3).

References:

1. Elwyn G, Lloyd A, May C, et al. Collaborative deliberation: A model for patient care. *Patient Educ Couns* 2014;97:158–64. doi:10.1016/j.pec.2014.07.027
2. Elwyn G, Thompson R, Edwards A, editors. *Shared Decision Making in Health Care*. 3rd ed. Oxford University Press 2016.
3. Stacey D, Légaré F, Col NF, et al. Decision aids for people facing health treatment or screening decisions. *Cochrane database Syst Rev* 2014;1:CD001431. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD001431.pub4

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