

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PATIENT ENGAGEMENT

Guendalina Graffigna and Serena Barello

- Engagement refers to a process by which people are enabled to become actively and genuinely involved in defining relevant issues in their care, making decisions about factors that affect their lives, designing and implementing policies, planning, developing, and delivering services, and taking action to make behavioral and lifestyle changes.
- In the healthcare setting, patient engagement is related not only to patients' healthcare behaviours such as adherence to treatment, self-management, and prevention, but also to a) psychological attitudes, motivations and feelings linked to patient readiness to change health behaviours; b) the patients' ability to give input in the co-design of initiatives and services related to their patient journey; c) research such as drug development processes and d) training of healthcare professionals.
- Crucial barriers to patient engagement are related to both psychological e.g. inability to cope with the disease, distressing emotions, cognitive impairment, low disease awareness, sociological e.g. in terms to equity in the care access, gender and cultural differences in the approach to healthcare, organizational e.g. the organizational culture of the health provider, institutional biases...; and policy factors.
- Patient engagement should be systematically measured across clinical settings and time-frames in order to orient personalized strategies and interventions to promote it
- Healthcare communication i.e. patient-doctor, public, and social marketing communication, plays a crucial role in fostering patient engagement.
- Medical education should include dedicated training programs to provide healthcare professionals with the necessary knowledge, and communication and relational skills to promote patient engagement.

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