

Ask Me 3 for Better Health

Background:

- Wisconsin *Aligning Forces for Quality* (AF4Q) wanted to implement an effective approach to combat poor health outcomes by improving communication between patients and physicians.
- People with limited health literacy skills are less likely to pursue preventive care and have a higher rate of chronic health conditions.
- Average annual health care costs are \$13,000 for individuals with limited health literacy skills compared with \$3,000 for those with higher literacy levels.

Idea:

Wisconsin AF4Q needed a solution that was accessible to a range of patient populations. A two-track pilot of the *Ask Me 3* health literacy program was implemented in eight clinics to:

- Help individuals learn what role to play in their own care, and
- Increase both patient and physician satisfaction with the visit.

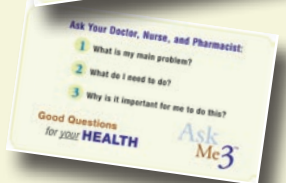
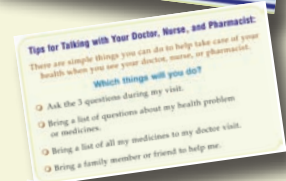
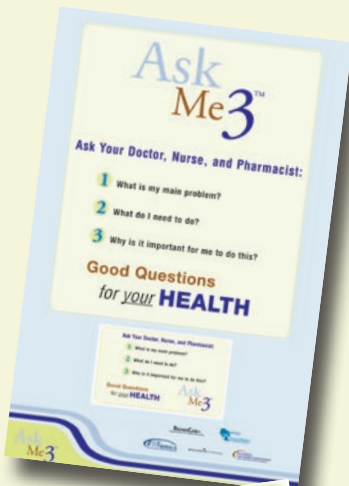
Action:

The *Ask Me 3* program promotes three essential questions for patients to ask during every visit:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is it important for me to do this?

The pilots are testing two approaches, including:

1. A low-intensity approach that makes materials available for patients in the reception area and exam rooms, and
2. A high-intensity approach that requires the active involvement of clinics (A clinic representative talks with each patient about the program and encourages him or her to use the materials and ask the questions; physicians also attend a training to learn strategies for improving their communication.).





Resources Needed:

- Graphic designer
- Production funds
- Physician champion
- Trainer
- Clinic coordinator

Preliminary Results:

- Increase in patient satisfaction: Patients have reported that the questions make it easier to talk with their physicians and that the physicians will answer the questions. Given the preliminary findings, it is likely that the final results will reveal an increase in patient satisfaction.
- High-intensity approach may be preferable: The low-intensity approach may not be enough to motivate patients to ask questions and, more importantly, ensure that they know the answers to the essential questions about their health.

Advice:

- Get strong buy-in and approval by the medical director with clear communication about this commitment to the clinic staff so the program is supported on a daily basis.
- Implement the program based on what works best for the clinics, e.g., hold meetings when it is best for their schedule.
- Provide on-site technical assistance, feedback and morale support to the clinic staff.

