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Acentra HEALTH

Partners in Care: Empowering Patients, Families, and Providers to Improve Care

October 28, 2026



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- After the webinar, participants will receive an email containing links to access the presentation slides as well as the recorded webinar.
- If you are having technical issues, please type a message in the Q&A tool.
- At the end of the presentation, we will be asking for feedback through the Q&A tool. We would appreciate your comments.
- We have resources for providers and stakeholders, including two newsletters: one for providers/stakeholders and one for beneficiaries. We also have a podcast with educational information and a YouTube channel, which includes instructions on how to fill out notices. For more information about our resources, visit our website at www.acentraqio.com.

Presenter



Jessica Whitley, MD, MBA
Chief Medical Officer, Acentra Health

- Dr. Whitley is a board-certified internal medicine physician and healthcare executive with more than 15 years of inpatient clinical experience, dedicated to advancing healthcare quality, patient safety, and physician effectiveness.
- As Chief Medical Officer for Medicare's Beneficiary and Family-Centered Care Quality Improvement Organization, she partners with CMS to translate clinical insight, data, and regulatory strategy into measurable improvements in care delivery, beneficiary outcomes, and system performance.
- Her leadership is grounded in trust, collaboration, and clarity.
- She brings physicians, executives, data scientists, and frontline teams together to strengthen documentation, optimize workflows, improve performance, and drive meaningful quality gains. She believes the strongest healthcare systems are built by engaged clinicians who feel respected, supported, and empowered to deliver safer, more effective care.

The Core Idea: Patient and Family Engagement



Patients, families, caregivers, and healthcare professionals working together as partners.

The partnership becomes real when people share information, ask questions, make decisions, and participate in planning care.

What Engagement Gives Patients

- A clearer understanding of diagnosis and treatment
- A voice in goals and decisions
- A way to identify changes and raise concerns
- Greater confidence preparing for care at home

What Engagement Gives Providers

- More complete information about the patient
- A better understanding of goals and barriers
- Earlier recognition of problems
- Safer, more coordinated care

The Patient Perspective: Patients are Members of the Healthcare Team



YOU KNOW YOURSELF BEST

You know what is normal for you, and you are often the first person to notice what has changed.

“ This is different from my normal.”

- Ask for an explanation in plain language.
- Bring a family member, caregiver, interpreter, or advocate when helpful.
- Tell the team about hearing, vision, speech, memory, mobility, or communication needs.
- Report new confusion, weakness, dizziness, pain, breathing changes, or loss of function.

Practical Tools: Preparation Before a Healthcare Visit

Good conversations begin before the appointment.

A few minutes of preparation can help the patient use the visit well and help the provider understand the situation more quickly.

Describe the Concern Use STARS

- **S**pecifics
- **T**reatment already tried
- **A**ssociated symptoms
- **R**elieves or provokes
- **S**everity

Bring a Medication List

- Prescription medicines
- Over-the-counter products
- Vitamins and supplements
- Dose and timing
- Allergies and side effects

Decide Who Should Participate

- Family member or friend
- Caregiver or advocate
- Interpreter
- Larger-print instructions
- Transportation or follow-up support

Patient Healthcare Awareness Campaign in Wantagh, NY | TakeCHARGE

Ask and Confirm: Questions Create a Safer Conversation

Patients do not need to know the perfect question. They need permission to ask one.

About a Diagnosis

- What is my condition?
- What does it mean in plain language
- What symptoms should I watch for?
- When should I call or seek emergency help?

About a Test

- What is this test for?
- What will the result tell us?
- What happens if I wait?
- When and how will I receive results?

About Treatment

- What are my options?
- What are the benefits and risks?
- Are there alternatives?
- How will we know if it is working?

Patient Safety: Speak Up When Something Seems Wrong



Speaking up protects the conversation.

A concern does not have to be proven before it deserves attention.

- You are called by the wrong name.
- A medication is unfamiliar
- The planned procedure or body site seems incorrect.
- Symptoms are worsening or different from normal.
- You do not feel prepared for discharge.
- The plan does not reflect your abilities or goals.

A RESPECTFUL ESCALATION

“I may be mistaken, but I am concerned. Can we review this together?”

Preparing for What Comes Next: Transitions, Discharge, and Care Coordination

The handoff is part of the treatment.
When a patient moves from one setting to another, information must move with the patient.



Before discharge, ask:

- **What changed?**
- **What medications change?**
- **What warning signs matter?**
- **Who will follow up?**
- **What help and equipment will be available?**

What if You Need Help: The BFCC-QIO Can Help

Discharge Appeals

The hospital tells you that you are being discharged, but you do not feel well enough to leave

Skilled Service Termination Appeals

You have been informed that your Medicare-covered skilled services are ending, but you do not agree

Check Case Status

You have already filed an appeal and want to check the status

Observation Appeals

The hospital changed your status from inpatient to outpatient under observation

Quality of Care Complaints

You are concerned about the quality of care you received from a Medicare provider

Immediate Advocacy

You need help resolving a medical care issue quickly

People with Medicare - Acentra Health BFCC-QIO

Provider Practices: Healthcare Providers as Partners



The tone of the encounter shapes whether patients will speak.

Patients may be afraid to appear difficult, ask the wrong question, or take too much time. A welcoming response changes that experience.

"Questions are welcome. Please tell me if something does not make sense or if you are worried about anything."

USE PLAIN LANGUAGE

Explain information in everyday words, then invite questions before moving on.

Provider Practices: Teach-Back to Confirm Understanding

Teach-back is an evidence-based communication method recommended by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). It asks patients or caregivers to explain, in their own words, what they need to know or do.

Why use teach-back?

The purpose is not to test the patient. It is to determine whether the healthcare professional explained the information clearly.

Example language

“I want to make sure I explained this clearly. Can you tell me how you will take this medication when you get home?”

“Please explain what symptoms would cause you to call us or seek emergency care.”

Teach-back supports:

Patient engagement

Patients actively participate rather than simply receiving instructions.

Safety

It can identify misunderstandings about medications, warning signs, treatments, and discharge instructions before harm occurs.

Adherence

Patients are more likely to follow a care plan when they understand what to do and why it matters.

Quality

Providers can tailor care to the patient’s needs, abilities, language, and circumstances.

Provider Practices: Listen to What Matters and Respond to Change

The patient's goal gives the care plan a direction.

A medically appropriate plan becomes more useful when it also reflects what the patient is trying to preserve.

Ask What Matters Most

- What is most important to you?
- What are you hoping to do after treatment?
- What concerns you most about his plan?
- What might make this plan difficult at home?

Take Reports of Change Seriously

- What is normal for this patient?
- What changed and when?
- What does the caregiver observe?
- What assessment or escalation is needed now?

"Thank you for telling me. Let us check this together."

Provider Practices: Medication Safety is a Shared Process

Medication reconciliation is more than checking a box.

At admission, transfer, discharge, or a significant change in condition, the team should understand what the patient actually takes.

- Which medications are new?
- Which medications should stop?
- Which medications changed?
- Why is each medication being used?
- How and when should it be taken?
- Which side effect require a call for help?



A PRACTICAL SAFETY CHECK

Invite the patient to bring every medication container to the visit when the list is uncertain.

Provider Practices: Make the Transition Workable at Home

A plan is only safe when the patient can carry it out.

The final questions are practical questions, and they often determine whether the plan succeeds.

Confirm the Essential Information

- Diagnoses and medication changes
- Pertinent and pending test results
- Functional and cognitive status
- Follow-up appointments and responsibility

Confirm the Environment

- Can the patient obtain the medication?
- Is transportation available?
- Is needed equipment available?
- Does the caregiver understand the plan?
- Who responds if the patient worsens?

Role of Executives: Reliable Systems and Supported Professionals

Patient engagement depends on the conditions in which care is delivered.

We cannot ask clinicians to communicate reliably without giving them the time, information, tools, and support to do it.

LEADERS SHOULD EXAMINE

Staffing levels, visit length, documentation burden, EHR usability, interpreter access, education materials, case management, social work, and team training.

LEADERS SHOULD MEASURE

Medication discrepancies, readmissions, patient understanding, discharge readiness, complaints, safety reports, experience, and disparities in access.

"Caring for providers is part of caring for patients."

Resources

- World Health Organization, *Patient Engagement for Patient Safety*: https://www.who.int/health-topics/patient-safety/patient-engagement-for-patient-safety
- World Health Organization, *Patients for Patient Safety*: https://www.who.int/initiatives/patients-for-patient-safety
- World Health Organization, *5 Moments for Medication Safety*: https://qualityhealthservices.who.int/quality-toolkit/qt-catalog-item/5-moments-for-medication-safety
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *Teach-Back*: https://www.ahrq.gov/patient-safety/reports/engage/interventions/teachback.html
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *Questions Are the Answer*: https://www.ahrq.gov/questions/index.html
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, *Engaging Patients and Families in Their Healthcare*: https://www.ahrq.gov/patient-safety/patients-families/index.html

Resources (Continued)

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Patient Engagement and Health Literacy*: https://www.cdc.gov/health-literacy/php/research-summaries/patient-engagement.html
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *5 Medication Safety Tips for Older Adults*: https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/5-medication-safety-tips-older-adults
- The Joint Commission, *Speak Up for Patient Safety*: https://www.jointcommission.org/en-us/knowledge-library/for-patients/speak-ups
- Medicare.gov, *Your Medicare Rights*: https://www.medicare.gov/basics/your-medicare-rights
- Medicare.gov, *Claims, Appeals, and Complaints*: https://www.medicare.gov/providers-services/claims-appeals-complaints



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