Introduction to Chronic Illness

John Gazewood, MD, MSPH
Practice of Medicine

Objectives

- Define chronic illness
- Discuss the impact of chronic illness on the US healthcare “system”
- Describe needs of chronic illness patients, and characteristics of systems
- Describe communication strategies useful in caring for patients with chronic illness

What is Chronic Illness?

- An illness that lasts more than three months, is persistent or recurring, and has meaningful impact on a person’s health status

Common Chronic Illnesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (yrs)</th>
<th>Common conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 – 44</td>
<td>Chronic sinusitis, hay fever, asthma, htn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>Htn, arthritis, hearing problems, sinusitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;64</td>
<td>Arthritis, htn, hearing impairment, CAD, COPD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chronic illness is a major challenge facing our health care system
Elderly population is growing rapidly

Chronic Illness Leads to Disability
One in five impaired persons needs help with basic daily activities

**Leading Causes of Disability in US, 1996**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ischemic heart dz</td>
<td>Ischemic heart dz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic accidents</td>
<td>Major depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lung cancer</td>
<td>Stroke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Lung cancer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol abuse</td>
<td>Arthritis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Michaud, JAMA, 2001

**Summary**

- Chronic illness is common
- Chronic illness causes disability, in addition to premature death
- Chronic illness affects people of all ages
- Chronic illness causes high resource use
- Chronic illness is expensive
Doctors don’t take care of patients, systems do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acute Illness vs Chronic Illness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acute</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onset: Abrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration: Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause: Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: Cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge: Phys Centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chronic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifactorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient and Physician</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Needs of Patient with Chronic Illness

- Symptom management
- Prevent/limit disability
- Cope with emotional impact
- Manage complex medication regimen
- Difficult lifestyle adjustments
- Obtain helpful medical care

Having Chronic Illness is Like Flying a Plane….

Chronic Care “System”

- Patient’s have best outcomes in systems
  - Integration and coordination of care
    - Multidisciplinary care
    - Between providers
    - Across sites of care
  - Requires significant administrative support
Self-management support

- Patient education
- Behavior change
- Psychosocial support
- Self-efficacy

Empower patient to enter a collaborative relationship

The Physician-Patient Relationship in Chronic Illness

Same Goal - Different Perspectives

Patient’s Agenda

- Live as “normal” a life as possible
- Maximize function
- Maximize quality of life
- Avoid sickness and death
- Minimize impact of illness on lifestyle, family, finances

Physician’s Agenda

- Assess effectiveness of therapy
- Check for progression of disease
- Assess for adverse effects of therapy
- Assess for impact of disease/therapy on patient’s life; coping mechanisms
- Assess if patient adhering to therapy
- Respond to patient concerns
Starting the “Diabetes Check” Encounter
- Do you have any particular questions or concerns?
- What do we need to talk about today?
- I have you down for a diabetes check today - are there other issues you want to talk about?

What if Treatment not Effective?
- Assess for “compliance”
- Compliance - the extent to which a person’s behavior coincides with medical care or advice
- Non-compliance - the patient’s failure to comply with regimen specified by the physician.
  - The “Bad Patient,” or the physician’s cop-out?

Asking About Adherence
- Check adherence - give permission to be non-adherent
  - Do you ever forget to take your medicines?
  - Are you careless at times about taking your medicine?
  - When you feel better, do you sometimes stop taking your medicine?
  - Sometimes, if you feel worse when you take your medicine, do you stop taking it?

Possible Adherence Problems
- Personality
- Psychodynamics
- Interpersonal dynamics
- Economics
- Culture and beliefs
- Cognitive factors

Enhance Understanding
- Use appropriate language
- Be concrete and explicit about problem and treatment
- Check understanding
- Give feedback and encourage questions
- Provide written instructions

Negotiate a solution
- Elicit patient’s perspectives
  - Goals
  - Suggestions
  - Preferences
- Help patient weigh benefits and burdens
- Modify plan
- Formulate agreement with patient
  - Affirm patient intent
Summary

- You will care for patients with chronic illness
- Patients receive the best care in well-designed systems
- Successful patient-physician relationships are patient-centered, and empower patient to be active participants