

Assisting Patients with Health Behavior Change

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An aging population and increasing incidence of behaviorally induced chronic conditions is driving a shift in healthcare globally toward patient centered approaches, prevention and management of on-going chronic conditions. In the United States this means a shift in care delivery models from acute to primary care. Registered Nurse Case Managers, Care Managers and Care Coordinators (RNCMs) working in these new models of care demonstrate a reorientation towards prevention, on-going management of chronic conditions, and effective strategies to encourage people to change behavior, make healthier lifestyle choices and seek and receive preventative and primary care needed to manage their chronic conditions more successfully.

In this new patient centered paradigm, RNCMs:

- Use behaviorally based strategies to drive sustainable behavior change
- Design and implement programs that enable patients to sustain their positive behavior change
- Recognize that health behavior decision making is impacted by patient's lived experiences (i.e. social determinants of health, literacy and cognition and social support)

The goal of contemporary RNCMs practice is to move patients towards successful self-management of their chronic conditions. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality offers a description of Self-Management Support that is well matched to and describes the role of the Contemporary RNCM.

“Self-management support is the help given to people with chronic conditions that enables them to manage their health on a day-to-day basis. Self-management support can help and inspire people to learn more about their conditions and to take an active role in their health care.”



RNCMs providing Self-Management Support focus on helping patients develop skills to solve self-identified health problems. Skill development strategies:

- Focus on patient learning of new skills that will also translate to the management of other health conditions or situations
- Increase knowledge and confidence to improve health outcomes
- Move patients towards increased self-efficacy
- Recognizes teachers can be professionals or peers
- Can be developed as part of an individual visit as well as in group interactions

Effective RNCMs use multiple evidence-based health behavior change strategies to assist patients towards more successful management of their chronic conditions. In addition to assessing patient Readiness to Change, the following strategies have been shown to have a significant, positive impact on patient self-management and health outcomes:

- Shared Decision Making
- Teach Back
- Motivational Interviewing
- Health Coaching
- Active Problem Solving
- Prioritization and Negotiation
- Group Interactions

The current complexity of patients with chronic conditions, the emphasis on health outcomes and shift to value reimbursement requires nurses practicing in Contemporary RNCM roles to demonstrate a high degree of expertise. Nurses in these roles must assess and strengthen their own knowledge, skills and confidence to effectively assist patients with health behavior change and provide self-management support. RNCMs are encouraged to identify their own individual learning needs and develop an education plan as part of ongoing role development. RNCMs should also consider peer support and review an important part of their role development plan.

