Enhancing Patients’ Satisfaction and Sun Protective Behaviors Using the ABC Method of Physician-Patient Communication

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INTRODUCTION

• The incidence and mortality from skin cancer is on the rise.
• Despite knowing the risks and receiving dermatological care, many patients frequently fail to use optimal UV protection.

The ABC Intervention

• A brief intervention delivered by dermatologists during office visits that include skin exams (takes approximately 2 minutes).
• The ABC intervention is a collaborative conversation with the patient that consists of six core components:
  1. Assess UV risk
  2. Assess sunscreen use
  3. Explore barriers to using sunscreen
  4. Facilitate patient generated solutions to barriers
  5. Assess/discuss use of other sun protection
  6. Summarize patients’ motivations and their ideas for improved sun protection
• Dermatologists were found to successfully deliver the ABC method with fidelity at 6-month follow-up.

METHODS

• Participants were 60 dermatology patients at Penn State Hershey Medical Center (treatment) and Northwestern University (control); 75% female; ages 21-85.
• Treatment group received the ABC method and control group received treatment as usual.
• Following their appointment, all participants completed an anonymous survey assessing use of sunscreen and sun protective behaviors.

RESULTS

• Patients who received the ABC intervention reported higher satisfaction regarding physician communication.
• Treatment group patients reported a higher quality of communication by discussing sunscreen use, barriers and sun protection.
• Treatment group patients reported significantly higher intentions to increase overall sunscreen use.

DISCUSSION & IMPLICATIONS

• Patients who received the ABC intervention reported higher satisfaction with their care, and had stronger intentions to increase sunscreen use and practice sun protective behaviors relative to physicians’ traditional communication methods.
• Treatment group patients reported a higher quality of communication by discussing sunscreen use, barriers and sun protection.
• These findings show promise for a brief and sustainable physician-delivered approach to enhance both patient care and protective behaviors in a dermatological setting.

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