ASK 4 FACTS: VETERANS’ PERCEPTIONS OF A TOOL TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

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Background/Significance: There is a correlation between lower health literacy, increased use of health-care, and increased cost of health care (IOM, 2004). According to anecdotal evidence, patients ask for clarification regarding discharge instructions, treatment plans, and/or medication administration despite instructions from nurses and pharmacists. Patients have difficulty understanding medical jargon and often need clarification regarding plans of care and medication dosages. An innovative communication tool, Ask 4 Facts, has been developed to improve nurse and patient communication and ultimately patient health outcomes.

Purpose: Describe Veterans’ perceptions of Ask 4 Facts (A4F) as a tool to improve communication

Framework: Iowa Model of Evidence-Based Practice to Promote Quality Care.

Sample/Setting: This study was conducted in a Midwest academic Federal medical center; 22 Veterans in outpatient areas or home telehealth participated.

Method/Design: A qualitative descriptive design was used and the study was approved by the IRB. An investigator-developed questionnaire was used to solicit opinions and advice about the Ask 4 Facts tool. A packet including an Information Sheet, Questionnaire, Ask 4 Facts tool, and Thank You note was distributed to Veterans that met criteria and agreed to participate in the study. Information was obtained via interview or mailed questionnaire after the Veteran agreed to participate. Data were analyzed using content analysis.

Findings: Results revealed 86% of Veterans believe the Ask for Facts tool would be helpful in communicating with nurses and providers. The top two methods that Veterans believe would be helpful in using the tool include a wallet sized carrying card and poster. Poster display included large posters in waiting areas and clinics, as well as wall monitors throughout the medical center.

Conclusions/Implications: A majority of Veterans think Ask 4 Facts is a helpful communication tool. Implementing Ask 4 Facts may improve communication among Veterans and clinicians. It will be implemented using a carrying card and wall posters and/or wall screens. Encouraging Veteran and clinician communication through the A4F tool may improve health outcomes. A study is needed of A4F effectiveness in promoting communication among Veterans and clinicians.