The Choosing Wisely Campaign

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In 2012, the American Board of Internal Medicine Foundation (ABIMF) and Consumer Reports launched the Choosing Wisely™ campaign to reduce unnecessary or “low value” medical care. This campaign aims to raise awareness of waste and overuse in medicine through evidence-based recommendations and to support patients and clinicians to engage in conversations about the appropriate use of tests and treatments.

After five years, Choosing Wisely has gained significant momentum as more medical societies have made Choosing Wisely recommendations and hospitals and clinics across the U.S. have incorporated the recommendations into their care protocols.

This article will provide an overview of Choosing Wisely, discuss the rationale for the campaign, provide a snapshot of Choosing Wisely today, feature local Choosing Wisely initiatives, and highlight useful resources for providers and patients. The next issue of Rx for Prevention will feature Choosing Wisely recommendations on preventive care for women.

More Care is Not Always Better Care
Choosing Wisely challenges the cultural norm that more care is always better care and strives to reduce the use of low-value care. In addition to sometimes causing harm, unnecessary care is wasteful and inefficient. The Institute of Medicine estimated that $750 billion spent on health care in the U.S. in 2009 was unnecessary.\(^1\) This equates to approximately 30% of U.S. health care spending.\(^2\) As physician decisions account for more than 80% of all health care expenditures, physicians need to be part of the solution.\(^3\)

Physicians are aware of the problem of unnecessary care. In a 2011 article in the Archives of Internal Medicine *Less is More* series, 42% of the primary care physicians surveyed reported believing that patients in their own practice received too much care.\(^4\) In addition surveys using hypothetical scenarios found that over a third of physicians said they would agree to a patient request for a test—even when they knew the test was not necessary.\(^5,6\)

**What is Choosing Wisely?**

*Choosing Wisely* provides physicians with resources and tools to help address this problem of unnecessary care. The ABIMF invites specialty medical societies to create lists of five (or more) things that physicians and patients should question. The recommendations must be evidence based. In order to create the list of tests, procedures, and treatments that *should not* be routinely used, the societies must use a transparent process to select care within their purview that is either used frequently and/or that carries significant
costs. Each professional society’s *Choosing Wisely* list includes their recommendations, the rationale, methodology and sources of evidence. The lists for providers, as well as patient-focused materials (created by Consumer Reports), are on the *Choosing Wisely* website and phone app.
In addition to making recommendations on patient care, Choosing Wisely aims to “promote conversations between providers and patients by helping patients choose care that is supported by evidence, not duplicative of tests or procedures already received, free from harm, and truly necessary”.7 To encourage these discussions, the campaign produces resources for patients such as cards and videos with 5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure and communications skills training modules for physicians (see resources section).
5 QUESTIONS to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure

1. Do I really need this test or procedure?
2. What are the risks and side effects?
3. Are there simpler, safer options?
4. What happens if I don’t do anything?
5. How much does it cost, and will my insurance pay for it?

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Choosing Wisely at 5 Years

Since the campaign began in 2012, Choosing Wisely has grown significantly in content, scope, and practice. Almost 80 specialty medical societies have created more than 500 recommendations. Several other professions (nursing, dental, and physiotherapy) are now partners with Choosing Wisely and the campaign has expanded to 19 countries. Choosing Wisely recommendations are being implemented by individual clinicians, group practices, and health systems. Patients and consumers are learning about Choosing Wisely through community groups, clinicians, health systems, and employers. Choosing Wisely has a growing on-line presence with the website reporting nearly 1.5 million visits a year. In addition, Consumer Reports staff routinely add Choosing Wisely information to the health-related Wikipedia pages, in recognition that Wikipedia is major source of online health information.

Choosing Wisely in Los Angeles

The most striking impact of Choosing Wisely can be seen when large practices or health systems implement Choosing Wisely recommendations. Here are two local instances of implementation of Choosing Wisely.

Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center: The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services collaborated with UCLA and others on an ABIMF grant to implement Choosing Wisely recommendations. They began in 2015 by eliminating routine preoperative visits and testing prior to cataract surgery. As a result, in addition to a large reduction in unnecessary testing, the average wait time for cataract surgery was reduced by six months.8

Cedars-Sinai Hospital: On a much larger scale, Cedars-Sinai embedded 180 Choosing Wisely recommendations, as well as patient materials, into the electronic medical record in 2013. Alerts were programmed to request that providers reconsider orders that might be unnecessary.9 Implementing Choosing Wisely recommendations across the entire

http://rx.ph.lacounty.gov/RxCW0917

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Cedars-Sinai health system saved $6 million in the first year. It was also reported that patients of physicians who followed all the Choosing Wisely alerts had fewer medical complications and left the hospital sooner.¹⁰

Locally on the consumer facing side, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) created the Health Care Consumer Protection Unit to reduce harms from needless tests and treatments and to help individuals make informed health choices. The DPH Health Care Consumer Protection Unit includes Choosing Wisely messages and health education materials on its consumer website.

**Resources**

**For providers:** In addition to the society lists of recommendations, the Choosing Wisely website has tools to help incorporate Choosing Wisely into practice, Updates from the Field, opportunities to join Choosing Wisely networks, and online interactive learning modules (see below). Practices in LA County that are interested in implementing Choosing Wisely may contact the DPH Health Care Consumer Protection Unit to facilitate introductions to the Choosing Wisely team at ABIMF.

**For patients:** Handouts, and materials in other formats encourage patients to talk to their provider about frequently ordered tests (such as pre-operative screening), treatments (such as antibiotics), and the management of conditions (such as back pain, sinusitis, pink eye, and headache). They explain when tests or treatment might be needed, steps that patients can take to improve their health, and list other resources. The handouts can be incorporated into electronic health systems. In addition to material on specific issues, Consumer Reports has created tips to help consumers communicate with their doctor, including 5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before You Get Any Test, Treatment, or Procedure [see below].
Choosing Wisely lists for providers and for patients
(with search tools)

- **Choosing Wisely Website** http://www.choosingwisely.org/doctor-patient-lists/
- **Choosing Wisely App** Download from iTunes
  (iPad and Android apps coming soon)

Patient handouts, posters and videos

- **Choosing Wisely**
  http://www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources
- **Consumer Reports** http://consumerhealthchoices.org/campaigns/choosing-wisely/#materials/
- **Los Angeles County Department of Public Health**
  (for consumers in LA County) http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/hccp/

Return on Investment

A common concern of physicians about implementing *Choosing Wisely* is the time it takes to engage patients in conversations about unnecessary care. In “Updates from the Field” a primary care physician describes how, in the long run, engaging in these conversations is a good investment:11

"Choosing Wisely gave me a lot of confidence in my ability to tell patients that I’m working on their behalf to reduce unnecessary care,"

"Doctors think it takes so much more time to talk patients out of something they want, and that agreeing to order a test makes everyone happy. But I’ve found that those conversations are not usually that time-consuming; and once you have a conversation about one unnecessary test, if you have a relationship with your patients, they understand why you’re not ordering a different test. And when you don’t order a test, you save the post-visit time you would have spent reviewing the results."

Dr. Eric Barbanel, Crystal Run Healthcare, New York State

Conclusion

The overuse of medical resources is not only costly, but can lead to undesirable side effects and unwarranted harm. The *Choosing Wisely* specialty society lists and resources can help physicians reduce overuse while providing care that is both evidence-based and patient-centered.
# Online Learning Modules

| Choosing Wisely Communication Modules          | Evidence-based, online interactive instructional modules, with videos, to enhance communication skills. Includes strategies to build trust and address patient attitudes and beliefs. |
| Drexel University School of Medicine          |                                                                                                                        |
| 10 modules from different specialty societies including American Academy of Family Physicians, American College of Physicians and American Academy of Pediatrics. |                                                                                                                        |

| High Value Care Cases                           | Cases show how to avoid needless costs and improve patient outcomes                                                 |
| American College of Physicians                  |                                                                                                                        |
| 5 cases - 30-60 minutes                          |                                                                                                                        |
| Free CME and ABIM MOC points                    |                                                                                                                        |

| Costs of Care                                    | Demonstrates a simple 3-step framework for clinicians to work with patients to help address costs and reduce financial harm. |
| costsofcare.org                                   |                                                                                                                        |
| 4 cases - 15 min videos                          |                                                                                                                        |
| Free CME                                         |                                                                                                                        |

| Conversations for Health - Antibiotics           | A simulated interactive primary care visit for antibiotics from the clinician and the patient’s perspectives. Can also be used by patients. |
| Kognito / Robert Wood Johnson Foundation         |                                                                                                                        |

| Steps Forward                                    | Describes steps to incorporate Choosing Wisely into physician’s practice to improve patient care.                         |
| American Medical Association                     |                                                                                                                        |
| 1 module                                         |                                                                                                                        |
| Free CME                                         |                                                                                                                        |

## References


8. Eye-Opening Results at LAC+USC Medical Center, Updates from the Field, January 12, 2017 http://www.choosingwisely.org/resources/updates-from-the-field/eye-opening-results-at-lacusc-medical-center/


Also in this issue:

- Influenza: Time to Start Vaccinating
- The *Choosing Wisely* Campaign
- HIV Prevention with PrEP
- Recognizing and Managing Mumps in Adults
Health Insurance Coverage and Access to Care Among Women

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