Patient-centered Care for Total Knee Arthroplasty

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Describe what is meant by patient-centered care.

Patient-centered care is a patient care experience designed to meet the individual patient’s and family members’ needs at each step in the care process. It should take into account the patient and his or her social circumstances because it may dictate differences in aspects of the care to be delivered. Using total joint replacement as an example, this process can be as broad as an entire episode of care, including arrival to the hospital on the day of surgery, the inpatient process, recovery, and the home rehabilitation process. It can also include the visit to the doctor’s office, the medical clearance process, and even patient education classes.

What is the role of the surgeon in patient-centered care?

The primary role of the surgeon is to listen to, understand, and educate the patient. In the case of knee arthritis, while using a process of shared decision making, the surgeon should help the individual arrive at a treatment plan that is best suited to the patient.

What is the role of the patient in patient-centered care?

The patient’s role is to be active in the care process from start to finish. He or she should engage providers by asking questions about the available procedure options themselves and gain the understanding needed to make good decisions.

With this approach in mind, what information do you provide patients who will undergo total knee arthroplasty?

In my practice, which exclusively involves the care of patients undergoing total joint replacement, after performing a comprehensive history, physical examination, and radiographic examination, I review all of the findings with the patient. I then explain all of the operative and nonoperative treatment options.
To facilitate the patient’s understanding, I use easy-to-read visual aids as a conversation guide. I give my recommendations based on the individual patient and his or her social circumstances, but make it clear that the patient should make the ultimate decision using the information I have provided.

**How does patient-centered care affect the surgeon’s decisions for total knee arthroplasty?**

Sometimes patients are not ready for surgical treatment. Surgeons should consider and respect social and cultural differences that can be impediments to patients proceeding with total knee arthroplasty. Culturally competent communication is a primary tenet of patient-centered care. Ultimately, establishing good communication and giving the patient the tools necessary to make treatment decisions empowers the patient to participate in his or her own health care.

**What social and cultural factors do you take into account during the patient-centered care process?**

Providers should be aware of the social and cultural factors that affect their patients. Family support network and expectations often affect treatment choice and follow-up. These factors should be discussed preoperatively. In addition, providers should speak with patients regarding their expectations and experience with others who may have had the same experience. Knowledge of others, not just a close relative or a friend, who had a successful joint replacement experience, can have a powerful influence on one’s decision making. In focus groups of patients considering total knee arthroplasty, we generally found that patients who did not know anyone who had undergone joint replacement therapy or whose knowledge was based on television and movie characters were most reluctant to have the surgery.

The most prominent theme that emerged from our query of patients was the influence of trust in the healthcare system and health practitioners. Patients who had previous unsatisfactory experiences were hesitant to consider surgery.

**How does patient-centered care affect patients who have undergone total knee arthroplasty?**

Patient-centered care is associated with high rates of patient satisfaction, improved functional status, and greater adherence to evidence-based care protocols. Patients who participate in the decision-making process regarding their care have a greater sense of self-worth through self-affirmation. They have a sense of accomplishment. Engaged patients participate more fully in the aftercare and rehabilitation necessary for good outcomes from total knee arthroplasty. For the hospital, the benefits include a shorter length of stay and lower infection rates, which translate into lower care costs.

**What research is being done in patient-centered care?**

Many studies have established that health care disparities exist. Currently, the question has turned toward interventions that can empower patients to participate in their individual care and decision making. Shared decision making involves educating patients and a shared process with the physician through which the patient decides on a best path of care. Motivational interviewing techniques use education and self-affirmation to empower patients to make health care decisions. A better understanding of where patients are in the decision process and the barriers preventing them from proceeding with needed care will ultimately allow surgeons to provide excellent patient care.