

How to Help Your Patients Choose Wisely

Appropriate care has been defined as providing a net health benefit for the patient or providing the right intervention to the right patient in the right setting at the right time. Overuse refers to medical services that are unnecessary, likely to lead to more harms than benefits, or both; such services are responsible for an estimated \$150 billion to \$200 billion in wasted health care spending in the United States each year. Although overuse can involve specialist procedures such as coronary revascularization or colonoscopy, it also occurs in tests or treatments provided in primary care settings. The American Academy of Family Physicians continually updates its Choosing Wisely treatment/test recommendation list, it can be found at <https://www.aafp.org/about/initiatives/choosing-wisely.html>

Choosing Wisely requires patients and physicians to accept that health does not always improve when more care is delivered. Furthermore, even if a test or treatment has been shown to benefit a particular group, using it as a universal standard or applying it to other groups, including those with less severe diseases or lower risks, can result in net harm. Challenged by this paradigm shift as well as the obligation to provide patient-centered, high-quality care, physicians must be equipped with tools and strategies to incorporate Choosing Wisely into practice.

Office & system strategies to aid decision making

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| Know the evidence | Familiarize yourself with not only the recommendations but also the evidence behind them. (see resources below) |
| Help patients make informed decisions | To understand why patients want a questionable test or treatment, use motivational interviewing techniques, such as asking open-ended questions, using statements of affirmation, practicing reflective listening, and summarizing important elements of the discussion. Ask what concerns them the most and validate those concerns, pay attention to nonverbal cues indicating distress or confusion, avoid using medical jargon, and refer to the relevant guidelines – while acknowledging each patient’s unique situation. |
| Build (& lead) the system | Discuss unnecessary interventions during monthly meetings with medical directors and practice leaders, use the Choosing Wisely recommendations as the basis for quality improvement projects, and advocating for technology that provides reminders and evidence-based order sets that improve your ability to provide effective care. |

Choosing Wisely Resources:

Choosing Wisely website: <http://www.choosingwisely.org/>

American Family Physician’s Choosing Wisely search tool for primary care-relevant recommendations: <https://www.aafp.org/afp/recommendations/search.htm>

AAFP’s Choosing Wisely resources: <https://www.aafp.org/about/initiatives/choosing-wisely.html>

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s Effective Health Care Program: <https://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/>