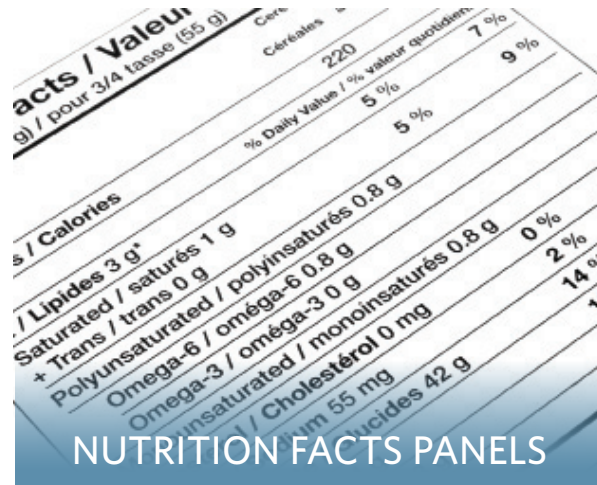


Getting Tools Used

Lessons for Health Care from Successful Consumer Decision Aids



NOTE: THIS IS ONLY A PORTION OF THE GETTING TOOLS USED RESEARCH REPORT. FOR THE FULL DOCUMENT AND OTHER INFORMATION VISIT WWW.CFAH.ORG.

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Foreword by Jessie Gruman

President & Founder, Center for Advancing Health

Advances in knowledge about the determinants of disease and the tools available to improve its prevention, management and cure have increased exponentially in the past two decades, promising improvements in the length and quality of life for many Americans. And the number and types of health professionals, diagnostic and treatment venues and insurance arrangements has multiplied to accommodate these advances.

The wealth of healthcare options that appear to be available can seem overwhelming to us, whether we are sick or well. On what basis should we choose one health plan over another? How do we know which hospital offers better care, the one down the street or the one in the next town? Which of the possible treatments for my breast cancer will work best for me? We rarely feel that we are qualified to pass judgment and often struggle to find the answers to these questions.

Over the past decade, healthcare experts have attempted to provide information that would ensure that we make informed decisions about our healthcare. In some cases by measuring different aspects of the quality and outcomes of different delivery and treatment options and then by organizing this information so that the options can be compared with one another. Report cards on health plans, physicians, hospitals and nursing homes are also available in various formats in many communities across the country, and a steady stream of decision support "tools" to aid patients in treatment decisions are making their appearance on various Websites.

These efforts are truly important. Many of these choices are complex, high stakes decisions and there is simply *no way* we can comprehend the trade-offs of coverage of multiple health plans or prostate treatment options without seeing the key information systematically arrayed.

And so it is puzzling that Americans show so little interest in making use of these decision support tools. Survey after survey shows that we aren't aware of such tools, don't think we need them and are resistant to using them when we know they are available. What gives? After all, we have a long tradition of looking up the cost of our used cars in the Blue Book and most of us trust the conclusions of *Consumer Reports* on refrigerators and weed-whackers, even

though we may not subscribe to the magazine. So it's not as though the idea of "comparison shopping" is novel. We just don't seem to find this model of decision-making relevant to healthcare.

Unfortunately, regardless of the outcome of healthcare reform, the success of electronic health records, or the growth of the patient-centered medical home, the number of choices we make about our healthcare - when we are sick or well - will only increase in the future. If we are to fully benefit from the healthcare available to us, we need decision tools targeted to options that are meaningful to us, from sources we can trust, that answer our questions and that clarify our options.

The "Getting Tools Used" initiative is an effort to gain insights into the success of familiar decision support tools from outside healthcare and derive the implications of those insights for the development and dissemination of such tools within healthcare. It contributes to the considerable efforts of employers, health plans, voluntary health organizations, physicians, patient groups, hospitals, and local, state and federal governments, to ensure that all of us are able to find and use safe, decent healthcare in order to live as long and as well as we can.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessie Gruman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jessie Gruman, PhD
President
Center for Advancing Health