



Professional Module: Overcoming Barriers With QAPI

Introduction

The benefits of patient engagement in QAPI is not just for the patients and families. Facility staff benefits from patient engagement by learning what's important to patients and improving overall quality of care, patient safety, patient satisfaction and outcomes.

One of the quickest ways to overcome barriers and obstacles to inviting patients to QAPI is to make patient attendance a priority. When patient and family attendance is not a priority, it's easy to find reasons for not including patients or shy away from engaging patients and families to their fullest potential.

Make time and take action to discuss which barriers are preventing patients from attending and address these first. Using this information, determine and implement approaches to overcome them.¹ Each of the following tables help to identify barriers and solutions to patient and family engagement at QAPI meetings. Take a look at each category to see what opportunities your facility team has to overcome barriers and improve patient and family engagement at QAPI meetings. After you review the barriers and solutions, determine at least one thing your facility staff start doing immediately, create an action plan, and begin engaging patients in QAPI meetings and activities.

Staff Barriers

Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide regular and consistent training on communication and body language.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide education to staff about QAPI and then invite them to attend a QAPI meeting. If staff is provided education and understands the QAPI process, then they are better equipped talk to patients about the benefits of participating in QAPI. Involve staff in a QAPI projects. For example, PCTs can perform hand hygiene audits on staff and report the findings in QAPI. Find ways to share information about QAPI to the staff. This can be done during daily huddles, monthly staff meetings, email communication, posting minutes in break room. Gain physician support. Arm the Interdisciplinary team (IDT) with evidenced-based research on the benefits of patient engagement in QAPI.

System Barriers

Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many patients rely on transportation to dialysis treatments and therefore, are not able to attend QAPI meetings. Ask the Social Worker to help with additional transportation resources including, finding a family member or friend to bring the patient to the meeting.
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer patients to call in for QAPI meeting or use ZOOM for a virtual QAPI meeting.

Patient Barriers

<p>Lack of Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate patients about their kidney disease, infection prevention and safety, etc. • Identify topic agenda items when inviting patients to a QAPI meeting. Because every patient has a different learning style, offer verbal and written education. Use teach-back methods and videos or diagrams for low literacy patients. Include family and caregivers in all education when possible. • Connect patients with a peer that may have attended a QAPI meeting to assist with concerns or fears. • For patients who are internet savvy, share reliable websites such as American Association of Kidney Patients, National Kidney Foundation, American Kidney Fund, ESRD NCC, or their ESRD Network.
<p>Low Literacy and Language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health literacy plays an important role in patient engagement. Patients may feel they do not have the knowledge to attend a QAPI meeting or be able to ask the right questions. Assure patients that sharing their ideas and thoughts is important. • Avoid acronyms, medical terminology and jargon, use plain language. • Use interpreters or language lines during QAPI meeting and during any type of education. • Limit or do not use written materials. If written materials are essential to the process, the rule of thumb is to deliver education at a fifth-grade level.
<p>Cultural Diversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient cultural and religious beliefs may keep them from asking medical questions or safety questions related to dialysis. Create an environment of transparency and without jeopardizing care, honor patients' beliefs and lifestyle.
<p>Mistrust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate an open-door policy where patients feel comfortable reporting concerns to the facility staff and management. Ensure to patients and caregivers that it is good to raise quality concerns to the facility.

Here are several suggestions to help patients and staff overcome concerns about attending a QAPI meeting:

- Begin by making sure that patients know that their views are sought, valued, and considered in facility decision-making and process improvements.
- Create a consistent message from all staff that patient perspectives and opinions are welcome by all members of the care team.
- Consider including QAPI information in routine communications to families.

QAPI meetings are a powerful way to for facility staff to connect with patients and families. By setting aside a portion of the QAPI meeting to learn what matters to patients and families, together, staff and patients can improve facility services, patient safety, and quality of care.

¹Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: <https://www.ahrq.gov/patient-safety/settings/esrd/resource/engagement.html> Accessed on May 19, 2022.