CASE STUDY: ACP DECISIONS

Sutter Health

Sutter Health's AIM Program Integrates ACP Decisions' Videos into Interdisciplinary Workflows to Improve Serious Illness Care

Background

Sutter Health's Advanced Illness Management (AIM) program uses nurse-led interdisciplinary teams to coordinate and provide high-quality, value-based care to patients living with serious illnesses.

Challenge

Conversations about serious illness care can be the most difficult of all communication scenarios. Advance care planning (ACP) is central to the AIM program's efforts to ensure that the care patients receive aligns with their wishes and goals.

Praba Koomson, DNP, Director of the AIM program at Sutter Health, realizes the importance of providing tools and resources to support clinicians' efforts to normalize ACP conversations:

"The right processes, tools, resources, knowledge, and skillsets have to be brought to bear for our clinical teams who have the responsibility of helping map out the best care according to patients' choices, values, and preferences."

Another Tool in the Toolbox

While the AIM team is well-versed in initiating and having ACP conversations with patients living with serious illness, Dr. Koomson is always seeking tools and resources to move that work to the next level. *"I describe the team as, comparatively, an elite team," she says. "However, that doesn't mean they cannot have another tool in their toolbox to achieve an even higher level of patient engagement."*

After attending a presentation on ACP Decisions' video-based patient decision aids, Dr. Koomson was impressed with these products and believed the platform would be impactful for the AIM team. It took a few years, but she successfully secured approval and funding to utilize the video-based patient decision aids platform.

Workflow Barriers

There was much excitement from leadership and clinicians around having access to the videos to support ACP conversations and improve the serious illness experience for patients.

Despite the enthusiastic buy-in, Dr. Koomson knew all too well how clinical implementations can falter if the solution is not incorporated into workflows. She explains: *"People do not often stop and think on a practical level to ask themselves, 'I have this wonderful resource – how am I going to use it most effectively?"*

The Solution

Sutter Health's AIM program took an interdisciplinary approach with its MSW (Master of Social Work) Practice Excellence Workgroup and Nursing Leadership. Together they collaborated to develop a video-based patient decision aids workflow.

The initiative's primary goal was to have a standardized workflow that would optimize the utilization of patient decision aids by supporting clinician engagement with the ACP Decisions video platform.

New Workflow Implementation

The following steps were taken to launch and promote the workflow initiative:

- Formal didactic training of AIM staff
- Dissemination of the video-based patient decision aids workflow document via email
- Inclusion of video-based patient decision aids interventions in the EHR's (EPIC) patient care documentation
- Development of weekly utilization reports shared with leadership and staff
- Daily huddles to reinforce learning
- Creation of a digital folder with all resources related to the initiative available to staff
- Weekly support sessions with the ACP Decisions team

The leadership team used **PDSA (Plan-Do-Study-Act)** cycles, a quality improvement method, to evaluate the workflow's effectiveness and determine possible modifications. For example, early in the implementation, the team learned a clinician would often engage with a patient and prescribe a pertinent video. However, the patient did not watch it or only viewed the first few seconds.

The evaluation of this finding led to the realization that they needed an additional layer in the workflow: finding out if a patient needs assistance to watch the video and then following up during the next engagement to address questions or discuss further. That simple change had a significant impact on the rate of patients watching their prescribed videos.

AIM Program's Six Pillars of Care

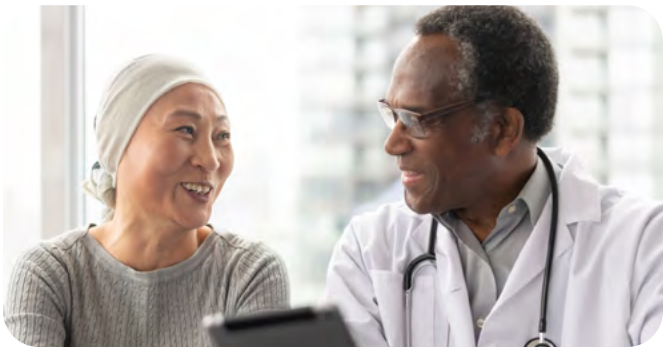
- Advance Care Planning & Goals of Care
- Red Flags & Symptoms Management Plans
- Medication Management
- Follow-up Visits and Care Coordination
- Patient Engagement & Self-Management Support
- Caregiver Support, Community Engagement, & Social Determinants of Health

Mapping Out the Workflow

By design, the video-based patient decision aids workflow facilitates clinicians' efforts to prescribe videos tailored to patient and caregiver needs. **A curated selection of 39 videos** is designated for deployment during defined patient and caregiver touchpoints that align with the AIM Program's six pillars of care.

Each touchpoint incorporates the same 5-step process that involves initiating the conversation, prescribing:

1. **Initiating the Conversation**
2. **Prescribing Relevant video(s)**
3. **EHR documentation**
4. **Assisting with form completion**
5. **Follow-up**



The Results

The AIM Program has a set objective to conduct and document ACP within 30 days of patient enrollment, which the team consistently meets. Utilization of ACP Decisions videos has created opportunities to further improve care delivery by facilitating ongoing ACP as patient circumstances change.

"I wanted to be able to measure and capture the value of using the video decision tools to have additional conversations, particularly with the workflow in place," points out Dr. Koomson.

"Our results show that once we started using the ACP Decisions videos, we saw more advance directive completions with about half of our patients making modifications to existing advance care plans."

ACP Decisions videos play a considerable role in helping patients make more informed decisions, which correlates with better outcomes. When patients can articulate what medical care they want and do not want, it is much easier to align care delivery.

"Once there is care concordance, you can eliminate unwanted care, which has a financial impact," Dr. Koomson explains.

The impact of the program from the standpoint of avoidable utilization is significant. **The metrics from 2021 demonstrate:**

Reduced ICU bed utilization by 63%

Shorter avg. length of stays in the hospital

Fewer ED visits

Decreased bed days per thousand

Beyond the Metrics

While the measurement and evaluation of the initiative's data and analytics have proven the effectiveness of the video based patient decision aids workflow, Dr. Koomson acknowledges **numerous benefits are not necessarily captured by the metrics, including:**

- Helping to normalize and facilitate these challenging conversations
- Establishing advance care planning as a standard practice
- Educating caregivers so they can better advocate for the patient's plan of care
- Building the competency and skill set of the AIM team
- Creating more opportunities for shared learning among the staff
- Fostering appreciation of how to create change through a well-structured approach

Moreover, the standardized workflow is easily implemented and adapted for any care setting.

Looking Ahead

Sutter Health has plans to advance quality care by using ACP Decisions videos:

- They are **developing a survey tool** to acquire a more accurate picture of clinicians' impressions of how the video-based patient decision aids and workflow have been helpful.
- The Sutter Health System recently began working directly with CMS as a direct

contracting entity for a value-based model. The team validated — based on their findings on the program's impact — that enrolling a defined number of patients into the AIM program will **potentially impact total cost of care savings and impact avoidable utilization**. "*The care coordination and advance care planning that is built into the care provided to the seriously ill population is what differentiates our program,*" says Dr. Koomson.

- Using the AIM experience with ACP Decisions videos as an exemplar for the rest of the system, the leadership team will be focusing on expanding their use as part of ACP best practices systemwide, for example, in ambulatory, primary care, and inpatient settings.

"Advance care planning should become just a part of the DNA of the work we do at Sutter Health," Dr. Koomson concludes.

About ACP Decisions

ACP Decisions is a mission-driven healthcare technology nonprofit that provides evidence-based video decision aids through an easy-to-access platform that help patients and their families make informed decisions about serious illness and end-of-life care. Our video library platform also supports health systems, hospitals, provider organizations, and insurers in their efforts to improve the quality of end-of-life care while reducing its associated costs.

Over 15 years of research shows patients make better-informed decisions after viewing a relevant ACP Decisions video, because they see procedures and interventions with their own eyes and can thoughtfully review video content at their own pace.

Contact us at info@acpdecisions.org to learn how to get started at your organization!

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