

# Shared Decision-Making in Patient Care: Advantages, Barriers, and Potential Solutions

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**Why this matters:** When it comes to your health, you deserve to be part of the conversation—not just a passive recipient of instructions. This research article examines shared decision-making, an approach where doctors and patients work together to choose treatments based on both medical evidence and what matters most to the patient. Understanding the benefits and barriers of this approach can help you advocate for more meaningful conversations with your healthcare team.

## Overview

This research article explores shared decision-making (SDM), a collaborative approach where physicians integrate scientific evidence with patients' personal goals, preferences, and values to make healthcare decisions together. The author examines how SDM differs from the traditional paternalistic model (where the doctor decides and the patient simply consents), reviews the evidence for its benefits, identifies key barriers to its implementation in practice, and proposes practical solutions to make it more common in both outpatient clinics and hospital settings.

## Key findings

- Shared decision-making leads to better outcomes: patients who actively participate in their healthcare decisions report higher satisfaction, are more likely to follow through with treatment plans, and experience improved quality of life.
- The BRAN framework is an effective tool for guiding shared decisions. It prompts patients and doctors to discuss four key questions: What are the Benefits? What are the Risks? What are the Alternatives? What happens if we do Nothing? This simple structure works across many different clinical settings.
- Time constraints are the most cited barrier. A typical doctor's visit often isn't long enough to thoroughly discuss options with patients who have complex health needs.
- Low health literacy is another major barrier. When patients struggle to understand medical information, meaningful shared decision-making becomes much harder to achieve.
- Training physicians specifically in shared decision-making skills has been shown to improve both patient outcomes and satisfaction, highlighting that SDM is a learnable skill not just a personality trait.

## What this means for you

You have the right to be an active partner in your healthcare decisions, and research shows it leads to better results. **Before your next appointment, consider writing down your goals, concerns, and preferences so you can share them with your doctor.** If your doctor presents a treatment recommendation, **don't hesitate to ask the BRAN questions: What are the benefits? What are the risks? Are there alternatives? What if I choose to do nothing for now? If you're a caregiver, these same questions can help you advocate on behalf of**

**a loved one.** If you feel your concerns aren't being heard, know that requesting more time or asking for written materials and visual aids is a reasonable and supported approach.

**Related CarePoint topics:** Wellness, Caregiver Support, Health Insurance, Shared Decision-Making, Healthcare Communication