Colleen Cameron: using questions for medication safety

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Colleen Cameron is committed to the highest medication practices at Grand River Hospital.

So she knows a few good questions can make all the difference for patients and families.

Colleen has been a pharmacist for 17 years, and is a tumor board member. She currently works in the pharmacy and oncology programs, but she also has experience in critical care and as a family health team.

Her key areas of expertise are medication reconciliation, helping patients transition into and out of hospital safety with regard to medications.

Colleen is passionate about her patients asking any questions about medication that will improve their health, before they put their minds at ease.

What’s the one question you believe is most important to ask when you encounter a patient for the first time?

The most important question or dialogue is one that puts the patient’s health at ease. At a stressful time, the best way to develop rapport, trust and gain meaningful information is by opening up at the first of communication from the patient.

What’s the best question a patient or caregiver could ask you?

Any question is a good question. Whether a patient or caregiver asks questions about medications, it opens up dialogue and helps the understand better where they are in their health journey.

Sometimes patients would like to know about side effects, drug interactions or how much a dosage will change. Others want to know full discussion about how a medication works in their body. Whatever the question, I am happy to discuss.

How can questions at the start of a new care or make a difference to their outcomes?

Getting the tone for open dialogue helps to build a patient’s health in keeping with what is important to them. When patients and their caregivers feel they are welcome to ask questions, it improves safety and helps them or their caregivers engage.

How do you encourage patients and caregivers to ask questions and be involved in their care or the care of a loved one?

Sometimes patients/caregivers don’t know how to get the right questions to ask about their medications. Fortunately, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP) Canada has just published a list of: “5 Questions to Ask About Your Medications”. They are:

1. Changes: Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?
2. Continue with the medications I need to keep taking, and why?
3. Prepare for side effects: do I take my medications, and how long.
4. Medication how will I know if my medication is working and what side effects do I watch for.
5. Follow-up do I need any tests and what do I discuss on my next visit.

Please feel free to share and join them off to follow along with you whenever you can to keep the dialogue going. The link is available at the Institute for Safe Medication Practices, Canada’s website (review in a new window).

Additionally the following link is an excellent streaming video by Dr. Mike Oren about the importance of keeping medication lists in step in a new window.

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Grand River Facts
Ontario Laboratory Accreditation has provided accreditation to the laboratory at Grand River Hospital. GRH scored 86.17 per cent overall compliance in its last accreditation.

Question? We’re here to help.

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