

PATIENT PRIORITIES CARE SPECIFIC ASK (Matters Most) CONVERSATION GUIDE - Hospital version*

The Hospital Specific Ask is the one thing the patient most wants to focus on or is concerned about during the hospitalization. Helping the patient formulate a “Specific Ask”: 1) Focuses communication, decision-making, and treatment planning on what matters most for persons with many conditions and complex care; 2) Identifies patient’s (and families) priorities and concerns. Going through a few preliminary questions helps to get to the Specific Ask.

Clinician steps	Rationale and Suggested Questions
1. Let patients know why you are asking these questions.	People may not expect these questions, so explain the first time you do the “Specific Ask”: <i>“The more we know and understand about what matters to you about your health and your healthcare, the better we can make sure that the care we give during your time in the hospital, as well as after discharge, is right for you.”</i>
2. Ascertain concerns and fears about health and healthcare.	Giving the patient an opportunity to share his/her fears and concerns about his/her health and about being in the hospital helps you tailor treatment and education, to help address these concerns: <i>“What concerns you most when you think about your health and about being in the hospital now? What fears and worries do you have about your health as you think about what might happen during this hospital stay?”</i>
3. Two preliminary questions about the outcome patients most wants from their hospitalization set up the “Specific Ask”.	To align care with what matters most to each person, help the patient identify a desired outcome of the hospital stay he/she hopes to achieve. To inform clinical decision-making, the patient’s outcome goal should be as specific, actionable, and realistic as possible: <i>“What would you most like to be able to do easier or more often as a result of being in the hospital?”</i> What health problem or healthcare does the patient think helps or impedes this outcome: <i>“What health problem or parts of your healthcare do you think is making it more difficult to do this?”</i>
4. “Specific Ask” Focuses on what is most important to the patient Address disconnect between goals and willingness to accept necessary healthcare	Specific Ask/What Matters links health outcome goal to health or healthcare: <i>“What is most important that you want us to focus on in your health (or healthcare)? If we could help improve this, what would you do more of or do more easily?”</i> Reflect back the Specific Ask: <i>“I think I hear you say that what matters most to you is (e.g. being less short of breath so you can walk around your house and take care of yourself). Is that correct?”</i> When there is a disconnect between patient’s goal and his/her willingness to accept healthcare: <i>“I know you want to (goal), but you find (X treatment needed to achieve goal) bothersome. That’s a tough tradeoff -are you willing to try (X) if that helps you (fill in goal)?”</i>
5. Action plan: Use patient’s goals and concerns in decision-making and communication	Align clinical decisions toward achieving patient’s priority goals. When recommendations are based on what matters most to the patient, you can be more directive: <i>“There are different things that we could do. But knowing what matters most to you, I suggest we try (fill in)”</i> . We can see how that helps you with...” <i>“I understand that (goal or concern) is important to you. I think (fill in) will help you with...”</i>
6. Document in accessible location and use in communication and decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document patient’s Specific Ask, preferably on a wallboard in the room and in the EHR in a prominent place • Encourage all clinicians and staff to discuss their how their care can help the patient achieve their goal and address their main concern • Document progress toward addressing the concern and achieving the goal. • Update goals or concerns as appropriate

* Developed for use by clinicians involved in Patient Priorities Care (patientprioritiescare.org) with input from Dr. Susan Block, Serious Illness Conversation Guide© 2018

