



Barbara McLaughlin

Barbara's expertise is HOW TO COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY with a focus on Healthcare. A lot of the information presented to patients is not remembered, understood or complied to. Barbara's life's passion is to help patients navigate and comprehend the healthcare world so they are not so frightened and upset by the mere process.

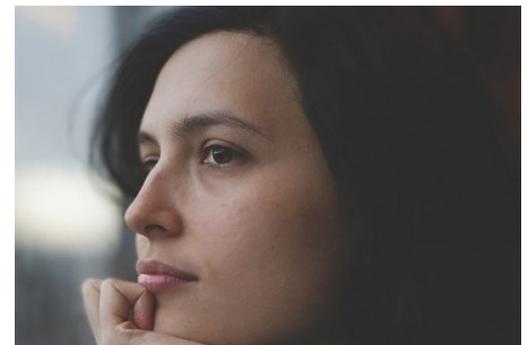
Barbara worked with Smart Source to create a series of products and services whose primary function is to educate and communicate to the patients. Visit our website at [www.hand-holder.com](http://www.hand-holder.com) and see how we meet this challenge. Then send us your comments and ideas so you too can help take care of everyone and feel good about your life every day!

## What's All the Noise About Transparency?

Barbara K. McLaughlin

The latest buzzword in healthcare these days appears to be "transparency". Does anybody really know what this means? What springs to mind first of course, is the desire patients have to KNOW and UNDERSTAND how much medical services cost and how much they are themselves responsible for.

This desire for accurate information from our healthcare providers has caused a flurry of activity in the technology marketplace as software providers provide products that can answer the calls for information. Hospitals and physicians, while trying to satisfy the myriad of governmental regulations and reimbursement requirements (some a result of the ACA), search for the holy grail of what they can charge within the rules that will still allow them to stay, or become, financially viable as well as competitive within their marketplace. This becomes even more complicated as we factor in the growing need for population health management along with the dearth of available qualified healthcare providers (aka doctors and



nurses). And so we have concentrated attention on estimating programs.

All this begs the question "what do PATIENTS mean when they talk of transparency?" Are they only referring to how much things cost? There are so many things patients do not know or understand about healthcare that it is silly to assume this is all patients are asking for when they talk about transparency. In speaking with a doctor – who will remain nameless – a nurse friend was told that the doctor intentionally used complex medical terms to describe things so the patients would think he was really smart. One could argue that this is obviating. This is the exact opposite of transparency.

For healthcare to be truly patient friendly and create better patient experiences the industry needs to recognize that patient education is a critical part of the process and one

that must embrace transparency from top to bottom, not just stay centered on costs. Patients want to know their costs but they also want to know what is happening, why it is happening, what can be done about, how they can help, and what is expected of them before, during and after their specific health event. They want to know where to go, what to do, how to get there, what to bring, what will happen when they get there, what will happen when they get home, and a host of other very basic bits of information effecting their condition. And they want to know it in a way they can easily consume it, understand it, and access it. Anything short of this is not true transparency and does not fully meet the needs of patients.

All of the above needs to be packaged and wrapped along with the financial impact of the whole event as closely as possible to what is happening and expected to happen. This does not just mean how much an x-ray costs, but rather how much the x-ray costs at this facility vs. others, what the associated medical staff costs are to both administer and interpret- in a way they can understand- and what facility fees they might be responsible for, along with how much the insurance company will pay and what their personal out of pocket expense will be. And what about the meds that will be needed after leaving here? How much will those cost and who pays for what? As we are all learning right now many Americans are not filling their prescriptions because of the inflated drug costs and so that patient conditions may worsen or never heal. But let's not be so naive that we think buying a price estimation program will cure all our transparency woes! We need to do more to fulfill our patients' requests. We need to educate them all along the way in a manner they can understand because an educated patient is a smarter consumer and ultimately a more active partner in their own LONGTERM health.

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