

Patient Encounter Cards Improve Physician and Patient Engagement for New Patient Visits in Orthopaedic Oncology

Charlotte Frances Wahle, Nicole J Newman-Hung, Mikayla Romana Mefford, Mathangi Sridharan, Alexander Christ, Nicholas M Bernthal, Duretti Fufa, Lauren Elisabeth Wessel

INTRODUCTION:

New patient visits in the orthopaedic oncology clinic are medically complex and emotionally nuanced. Clear communication of the diagnosis and plan can be difficult. This study aimed to validate the use of a Patient Encounter Card to optimize patient/physician post-encounter satisfaction.

METHODS:

All new patients who presented to the clinics of three fellowship-trained orthopaedic oncologists from September 2023 to March 2025 were included. In the initial (pre-intervention) phase, clinic visits were conducted without modification. A post-visit survey was administered. Patients were queried on their satisfaction with having concerns and questions appropriately answered, understanding of the treatment plan, and perceived patient/physician connection. During the intervention phase, a Patient Encounter Card [Figure 1] was implemented. The “patient” side was completed in the waiting room before the visit. The “physician” side was completed during the visit. Patients then completed the same post-visit survey. Residents and fellows were surveyed at the end of each clinic.

RESULTS:

A total of 245 patients and 9 physicians were surveyed. During the intervention phase, patient scores improved in response to each of the twelve patient satisfaction and competency metrics [Table 1]. Following intervention, 94% of patients strongly agreed that the doctor listened to what they had to say and 93% felt that their main concern had been addressed. Compared to the control group, significantly more patients reported that they were “very satisfied” with their visit (p=0.048) and “very confident” that they were able to make the most of their visit with the doctor (p=0.041). Significantly more patients reported that they were involved in their treatment plan as much as they wanted to (p=0.046). Finally, 100% of surveyed physicians believed the intervention helped improve clinical efficiency.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

Employing a simple Patient Encounter Card when evaluating new patients in orthopaedic oncology clinic strengthened patient-physician interactions. Patients felt significantly more satisfied with their visit and degree of involvement in their care, while physicians felt that the tool improved clinical efficiency. Given the low-cost and simple implementation, Patient Encounter Cards may strengthen patient and physician communication while improving clinical efficiency across a range of medical and surgical specialties.

Figure 1: (a) Patient (b) Physician Encounter Cards

a. Patient Encounter Card
PATIENT
 My favorite place to travel is: _____
 I am here today because _____
 My main concerns are:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

b. Physician Encounter Card
PHYSICIAN
 The doctor's impression was: _____
 Suggested next steps are:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

Table 1: Survey Responses by Study Cohort

Questions	Baseline % (n) n=120	Intervention % (n) n=125	P value
The doctor carefully listened to what I had to say	Very Well 89.2 (107)	Very Well 94.4 (118)	.135
The doctor addressed my main concern during the visit	Very Well 89.2 (107)	Very Well 92.8 (116)	.320
The doctor explained the recommendations for treatment in a way I could understand	Very Well 88.3 (106)	Very Well 93.6 (117)	.149
I was involved in decisions about my treatment plan as much as I wanted to be	Strongly Agree 77.5 (93)	Strongly agree 87.2 (109)	.046
I trusted / had confidence in the doctors	Strongly Agree 75.8 (91)	Strongly Agree 84.0 (105)	.110
Know what questions to ask your doctor	Very confident 60.0 (69)	Very confident 64.5 (78)	.480
Make the most of your visit with your doctor	Very confident 61.1 (69)	Very confident 73.5 (89)	.041
Get your doctor to answer all your questions	Very confident 67.3 (76)	Very confident 71.7 (86)	.465
Get your doctor to take your primary health concern seriously	Very confident 71.9 (82)	Very confident 79.3 (96)	.185
Get your doctor to do something about your primary health concern	Very confident 71.1 (81)	Very confident 75.2 (91)	.472
I connected with the doctors	Very well 75.0 (90)	Very Well 83.2 (104)	.114
Satisfaction with visit	Very Satisfied 81.5 (97)	Very Satisfied 90.3 (112)	.048