

Online Supplementary Material

Bennett IM, Switzer J, Aguirre A, Evans K, Barg F. 'Breaking it Down': Patient-clinician communication and prenatal care utilization among African American women of low and higher literacy. *Ann Fam Med*. 2006;4:334-340.

<http://www.annfammed.org/cgi/content/full/4/4/334/DC1>

Supplemental Appendix 3. Additional and Expanded Quotations

Included below are quotes addressing themes identified from transcripts of focus groups from low and higher literacy.

Clarity of Information

"I always understood what my doctor was talking about because she never spoke to me in medical terms. She always spoke on terms that I would understand, so I never had to ask her to explain nothing."

"Like if I didn't understand something, like, I couldn't understand a word they was saying, she would break it down to me—this mean this."

"Dr. (Name) like, broke it down for me so I could understand it."

Unclear Information

"I mean, they would answer it, but I couldn't really understand it, because they wouldn't really telling me in a way that I could understand it."

Respondent C: I wouldn't tell her that I didn't understand it, you know. But, you know, people know when you know, just by talking to you."

Moderator: "... would they do anything to help you understand better?"

Respondent C: "No, no."

"They was supposed to ask me questions, but they ask me questions but—when they know you don't—when they know you don't know nothing, they get over on you like that."

"They skip you, skip through it. 'Your baby's fine. Fine' Give you another appointment to come back."

Continuity of Care

"I think with any—even other than prenatal, I think that whether it's just your regular OB, foot doctor, head—whatever—I think it's important to have, like, one main doctor instead of seeing a bunch of different people."

"See, it's kind of easier with one doctor 'cause they know, you know, exactly who you are and everything."

"Like she said, a steady doctor, and not having a steady doctor made it harder because I would rather have the steady doctor because someone that knows something about your child and—that's why I went to the—when I was going to different hospitals they told me to stick to one doctor, that way they would know how I reacting to stuff, and my pregnancy would be a whole lot easier."

"I mean, because I bonded, I mean, my confidence and my trust—not saying it's not in the rest of the doctors, but I felt like that's where actually I felt comfortable, me and my baby felt comfortable. I mean, we know the procedure of how the doctor go about examining and touching and explaining and, you know it's like if someone making a cake, and then all of a sudden and they have to stop and then someone else finish putting the recipes or the—you know, it's going to feel a little different, you know? I just feel like me personally, whatever doctor I start off with, start out

with, that's the one I would like. I wish I would be able to have for my delivery, you know? I just feel like that. I felt like more comfortable."

Participant 1: "They got some type of trust—like, you know, you don't fully trust anybody but you trust like..."

Participant 2: "Somebody that knows something about you."

Lack of Continuity

"That's the ... thing I didn't like was that was that I didn't have a main doctor. I always had this doctor and that doctor, I didn't know who was my doctor..."

"I didn't like ... that I had different doctors. I couldn't say, 'Oh, well they know me.' It was never like that. It was always, you know, to come in the room and read the chart. They didn't know me personally.

"They was, like, confusing you. Somebody tell you one thing, another doctor tell you another thing."

Patient-Physician Relationship

"I came in and on a name basis we knew each other, and it was more like I could be for real, you know, and say how felt."

"... my doctor that I had I feel a relationship with her. She knew me by first name basis, and even though she wasn't there when my baby was delivered, she came and saw me the first thing next morning. She came; she was right there."

"... with my first doctor, she—me and her—we were like, you know, laugh a little bit and, you know, we would like ... talk a little, you know? Get a little familiar, just a little bit."

"Conversations, conversation, concern, questions, you know, the answers you get back from they doctor and, you know, if we share something like, 'Well my wife when she was pregnant', and blah, blah, blah, blah, you know, you feel comfortable with that doctor. You feel like you can trust him, you know. If the doctor say, 'Baby's kicking, make the next appointment,' you are, like, 'Wow, that's it?' You know, you feel like—I don't want this doctor no more,' or 'you are not interested in your job or my health' and you just go on ... that plays a big role in the bonding situation."

"... a comfort was I didn't take it where it was just a professional level of communication, like, 'I'm the doctor, you the patient.' My point of comfort was I feel like I can relate to you, not just only if, like, you say, if you say to me, 'Well are you OK? Is anything on your mind?' you know? I felt, like, comfortable in bonding with you, like that then I might say, 'blah, blah, blah.' But if I didn't feel like that, then I would say, 'I'm OK,' you know, 'I'm all right,' but you know I didn't feel like that. I didn't feel that comfort. I didn't feel that bonding. I just felt like it was no more that just professional."

"They answer my questions, but sometimes they don't feel like it. You can tell when a person don't feel like it. You get that vibe from 'em, like 'I don't really want to be here, come on, ask me questions so I can get outta here, I go take somebody else—you get that vibe."

Respondent D: "Yeah like, I think they blew it up a little bit too much saying about when—saying that my baby could have Down's syndrome, cause then when I talk to somebody else, they told me, well, you were one out of ... this amount, you're all right.

Respondent E: "I think they—like he said, they read up on—but all they can do is estimate it. They not sure what they really, they can just tell you what they read in there books. They not really knowing what's going on. They just estimate like when they tell you the baby weigh—, they don't really know how much the baby weigh. It's an estimate of weight for you. I don't know, but I think they just estimate everything. Sometime it come out true, sometime it come out—right, wrong. To me they estimate everything. It's too much. They blow it out of proportion, too."

"And another thing is, on the judgment, whatever, they also judge you because it's—you know the thing they call statistics, because somebody down the road, 'cause a lot of young girls, the statistics or whatever say a lot of young girls they get pregnant and stuff. They look at you like they, like, keep asking you, 'Well did you have any abortions, or blah, blah ... how many times have you been in here?' 'No, I told you I never had an abortion, never had a miscarriage.' I mean

some people go through stuff, but that's my first child, and I kept, you know, I kept telling them that, and they keep asking me all these questions. If I told you the first time, don't ask me again, because you'll get the same answer. That's another thing that I don't like. They—people—use their power in the wrong way. They get a little bit of power, and get a big head about it and get out of control."

"The first time I was scared, so scared. Scared to ask question cause I ain't know if the answer wrong. I didn't know what to ask cause I was young. I didn't know what to ask this fact, what—I can't ask them nothing cause I didn't know about babies. I just trying—I found out—my first baby, I was 3 months, so I ain't know what to ... ask me questions, I ain't know what to say back. I'm like, I would tell 'em ... I'm like, 'I don't know, I don't know, I don't know.' They kept asking me questions like, I don't know, 'How many times your baby ...?' I don't know. I don't know. I'm not used to this. With my second time, I was prepared, but I didn't know how to answer my questions right when I was first, I didn't know what to say."

Strategies to Address Threats to Communication

"She just say words, and I'm like, what do that mean—it was like this one word, I can't—it's like a C word. I don't know what it is. I can't pronounce it. And I'm like, what do that mean, and she tell me what it means, but I still don't understand what it means. I act like I did, I'm like, all right, whatever."

"Like I could go ask [the nurse] questions and stuff, and she'd know, too, so I didn't really get cheated out of nothing. The lady that wouldn't answer I'd have Miss X answer so."

"It's like that doctor can't relate to what you're going through, you know? A doctor don't write down everything you tell 'em you're going through. 'Monday I went through this, Tuesday I went through that.' They don't write all that stuff down. But if—and then you go back to the clinic on a Wednesday—she's like, 'Oh well how's your sickness, is it getting better, is it getting worse?' But the other doctor don't know you have sickness, because she didn't write it, so he can't ask you so you feel like, 'Well he ain't ask about my sickness,' so whether I tell him or not it don't make a difference, 'cause he ain't my doctor."

Respondent F: "My doctor, like, right—my doctor, if I didn't understand what she was saying, sometimes I just pick my chart up and be like, 'OK, what's this mean? What this mean? What this mean? And she'll let me know. She'll let know."

Respondent G: "I thought—because for a while I thought we couldn't pick up our charts...."

Respondent F: "It's yours. No, it's yours."

Respondent G: "I know. I was like, 'I want to read that chart.'"

"One thing is when they talk in the medical terminology, sometime they make things a big word that could be broken down, and I just let them know, can you talk to me in plain English, put that in my terms where I can understand? And they'll do it for you."

"Like they say 'a closed mouth don't get fed.' If someone's saying something, you need to say, 'I don't understand that, can you please explain?' you know, it's about your child. The last thing you need to do is sit there and act like you know what's going on and then have that question in your mind."

"I would read my book, then I would know what the next stage was when I went to the doctors, and me and my husband would write down questions to ask the doctors. We'd go in there and we'd like go back and forth...."