

Scenario for Method 5: Shared Learning

Example: Working with a patient with Cerebral Palsy (CP) and restricted mobility

Identify: Your long-time patient with CP recently started a job as a file clerk. She is able to ambulate with forearm crutches but has excessive spasticity for which you recently increased her anti-spastic medication. She comes in reporting that she is exhausted by the time she gets home from work and unable to do her exercises or even make dinner.

Connect: You are concerned that fatigue may be a medication side effect. She is telling you that her exhaustion is from her struggles with the crutches all day long and lack of exercise. You make a medication change. The patient completes a PROMIS measure on fatigue at the end of the visit for baseline, and is sent the measure by the medical office assistant using secure email every two weeks for two months.

Understand: When you review her responses, you see that her level of fatigue has increased. You realize that you did not recognize her perspective and reflect back on how she discussed feeling tired because of how difficult it is to move around all day on crutches. At this follow-up visit, her fatigue is unchanged. Both of you discuss options and she pulls out a paper from her purse showing a sports-style wheelchair. You discuss your concern that use of a wheelchair may further weaken her muscles. She thinks that if she confines use of the wheelchair to work, she will have the energy to exercise when she gets home. You agree to prescribe the chair and monitor her progress and strength. The PROMIS measure continues to be sent out every two weeks, and the patient schedules a 2-month follow-up visit after she gets her wheelchair.

Evaluate: At the third visit, she is very happy with use of the wheelchair but thinks she may not be as strong. She has been doing her exercises at home but not as regularly as she's hoped. When you both look at the trends of the PROMIS measure you both see how her fatigue has decreased, and she now has more energy. However, although her upper and lower extremity strength appear unchanged, her flexibility is reduced. You both decide to refer her to physical therapy and she will work on an exercise routine that can fit best into her life. You will ask that the therapist forward a report so that you can incorporate their recommendations into her plans and goals.