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Coalition for Patients' Rights™ Provides Tips to Assist Patients in Choosing the Right Care Provider

Consumer "Toolkit" helps patients choose and ensure access to broad spectrum of providers

WASHINGTON – How can consumers and patients find satisfaction in an increasingly challenging healthcare environment? As concerns grow about the quality of healthcare in the U.S. and looming provider shortage threats, the Coalition for Patients' Rights™ (CPR) suggests that asking a few key questions and gaining knowledge about health professions will help people find the healthcare professional that best matches their needs.

To help people navigate the decision-making process and identify their own priorities, the Coalition, a national coalition of more than 35 organizations, has developed a "toolkit" of materials that provides helpful resources for patients looking for the most appropriate healthcare provider for their individual needs. It gives consumers materials that help protect and promote their access to a broad spectrum of healthcare professionals.

Amid the challenges of making co-pays, booking timely appointments and navigating provider networks, the basics of what patients really want often gets lost. A recent survey of consumers showed that patients generally want more continuity and more time with their healthcare providers. Of those surveyed, 34 percent said that spending more time with a healthcare provider to ask questions and receive information about health treatments and medical procedures is a top priority and 36 percent expressed their interest in having a provider who can oversee and coordinate their healthcare needs. Cost is also a large factor, and 56 percent indicated that having healthcare that is affordable and high quality would be satisfying for them.ⁱ

"For patients seeking qualities like this, there are millions of healthcare professionals, such as nurse practitioners, occupational therapists, and psychologists to name only a few, who are ready and available to provide high-quality care to patients," said Maureen Shekleton, spokesperson for the Coalition. "But often consumers don't know what they do or how they can play a role in ensuring their good health. It's important Americans are aware of the different types of healthcare professionals that are available so they can make informed decisions in selecting the care that best suits their individual needs."

The Coalition's Consumer Toolkit contains materials that help consumers understand what questions to ask on exactly these types of issues. Included are tips on finding and selecting healthcare providers and questions that consumers can ask to find out whether a healthcare professional will be a good fit for them. The Coalition suggests that consumers ask questions like:

- How soon can you get an appointment?
- How much time will you get with the provider?
- Will you likely see the same person each time you visit?
- Does the healthcare provider's approach fit your preferences?
- Is the healthcare provider promptly available if you have questions?
- Can you request a consultation before your first appointment?

The Coalition's Consumer Toolkit also includes background information on a variety of healthcare professionals whose services may not be recognized by consumers. These professionals, who can address a wide range of healthcare issues, complete years of education in their respective specialties and meet rigorous licensing and certification standards. They have long been recognized by state and federal agencies as qualified and essential contributors to the U.S. healthcare system and are well-prepared to provide care.

"Americans have said that they're looking for personalized care and attention, and the healthcare professionals who are members of the Coalition are committed to these very principles," continued Shekleton. "Often, providers like advanced practice nurses, including nurse midwives, nurse practitioners, nurse anesthetists and clinical specialists, as well as psychologists, occupational therapists, naturopaths, and many others are able to spend more time with patients. Longer appointments allow patients to share more information about their health needs, leading to higher levels of satisfaction and care."

In addressing patients' concerns about cost of care, the Consumer Toolkit recommends that patients check what type of insurance programs each provider accepts before scheduling appointment, and if the patient is uninsured, how various providers may be able to lower their out-of-pocket costs.

The Consumer Toolkit can also help consumers address growing concerns about access to healthcare providers of choice. Various state-based efforts by physician groups are aimed at inhibiting patient access to a full range of healthcare professionals by limiting "scope of practice" through legislation or regulation. The Toolkit provides consumers with user-friendly templates that equip consumers to express their own experiences and concerns to both their insurer and their legislators.

The Consumer Toolkit materials are available on the Coalition's website through the following link: <http://www.patientsrightscoalition.org/Patient-Resources.aspx>.

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About the Coalition for Patients' Rights™

A national coalition of more than 35 organizations, the Coalition for Patients' Rights represents more than three million licensed and certified healthcare professionals committed to ensuring comprehensive healthcare choices for all patients. It was formed in 2006 in response to divisive efforts by the Scope of Practice Partnership (SOPP), an alliance of medical and osteopathic physician organizations including the American Medical Association (AMA), which aims to limit the scopes of practice of other healthcare professionals.

The Coalition is comprised of a diverse array of healthcare professionals, including registered nurses, naturopathic doctors, psychologists, audiologists, physical and occupational therapists, advanced practice registered nurses (certified registered nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, certified nurse-midwives and clinical nurse specialists), foot and ankle surgeons, and chiropractors. A full list of members is available on the Coalition's website: www.patientsrightscoalition.org.

<http://www.aapa.org/news/media-resources/news-releases/2218-aapa-poll-finds-patients-want-more-time-improved-communication-with-health-care-providers>