

What is shared decision making?

Definition of shared decision making

Shared decision making is a collaborative process that involves an individual and their HCP working together to reach a joint decision about care.¹

What is involved in shared decision making?

In essence, shared decision making involves choosing tests and treatments based on both evidence and the individual's preferences, beliefs and values. Shared decision making brings together:¹



The clinical expertise of the HCP



The individual's expertise of themselves

The purpose of shared decision making is to ensure that the person understands the risks, benefits and possible consequences of different options through discussion and information sharing.

What does shared decision making mean?

For an HCP²

- Providing ready access to patient decision aids where appropriate
- Using clear language and communicating in a way that can be understood
- Communicating with and involving other people in shared decision making, where appropriate

For a patient¹

- Receiving care and support based on their needs
- Being involved in decision making together with their HCP
- Being equipped with the correct tools and resources to support making an informed choice

The challenges associated with shared decision making in patient care

Communication to reach a joint decision in patient care can be challenging because:³

A cancer diagnosis evokes distressing emotional responses in both clinicians and patients

Patients are confronted with an abundance of complex information and decisions to make

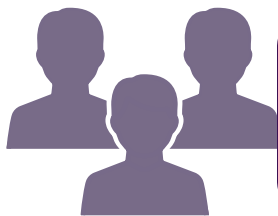
Decisions in care can lead to adverse outcomes

Patients can experience decisional regret

The patient experience above can be mitigated by integrating the affective and relational aspects of communication with the instrumental and technical aspects of communication, as patients require not only medical information and instruction but also emotional support and reassurance.³

Shared decision making considerations in patient care

- **Individual values and preferences** – understand what matters to the individual and tailor aspects of care accordingly⁴
- **Right to autonomy** – as an ethical duty for individuals, it is important to respect people's right to make decisions about their own life⁴
- **Informed consent** – the law around informed consent changed in 2015 towards a more active role for patients involving the discussion of treatment options⁵
- **Professional responsibility** – many policies, both HCP-specific and NHS-wide, include informed consent and shared decision making⁵
- **Clinical responsibility** – research suggests less decisional conflict and regret, as well as better relationships, when shared decision making is practiced^{4,6}



Shared decision making enhances patients' satisfaction with a decision, which could increase adherence to treatment^{4,7}

Preparing and implementing shared decision making in HCPs' clinical practice

Before appointment²

- Provide **patient decision aids** in their preferred format prior to discussions and encourage them to think about:^{1,8}
 - **What matters to them**
 - **What they hope will happen as a result of the discussion**
 - **What questions they have**
- Offer to **include friends or family** when discussing care¹
- For people who will not have friends or family present, **offer additional support, such as a nurse, social worker or volunteer**¹

During appointment¹

- Be prepared to **communicate via different channels**, such as a call or face to face
- When discussing decisions, **encourage people to think about what matters to them** and to express their needs
- Personalise information on risks, benefits and consequences as much as possible
- Deliver information in **manageable chunks**
- Check that the person understands the information
- Make a **joint decision or plan** about treatment or care

Post-appointment¹

- Offer further **patient decision aids** to help them understand what has been discussed and agreed
- Offer additional support, where necessary
- Ensure that the patient **understands who to contact** with any further questions
- **Remember: skills trump tools, attitudes trump all!**⁹

Detailed guidelines on shared decision making are available here:

NICE – Shared decision making¹

Various training resources are available here:

NICE SDM learning package¹⁰

Check out our useful links section for the NICE SDM package

Shared decision making is a skill, so practice is key!

HCP, healthcare professional; SDM, shared decision making

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4. Josfeld L, et al. J Cancer Res Clin Oncol 2021;147:1725–32; 5. Chan SW, et al. BMJ 2017;357:j2224; 6. Wang C, et al. Healthcare (Basel) 2022;10:66; 7. Stacey D, et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2017;4:CD001431 8. Joseph-Williams N, et al. BMJ 2017;357:j1744;

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10. NICE, National Institute of Health and Care Excellence. Shared decision making learning package. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng197/resources/shared-decision-making-learning-package-9142488109>. Accessed 15 May 2023