

# Health Awareness



## Two-Way Communication: A Key To Better Health Care

(NAPSA)—When it comes to quality health care, communication is key. In fact, improving the communication between clinicians and patients can be an effective way to improve the quality of health care.

That's one of the basic ideas behind a new initiative designed to encourage clinicians and patients to engage in effective two-way communication to ensure safer care and better health outcomes.

### Questions Can Reveal A Lot

The new phase of the initiative features new public service ads directed at clinicians with the message that a simple question can reveal as much important information as a medical test. Research shows that better communication correlates with higher rates of patient compliance with treatment plans and can lead to better blood sugar control among patients with diabetes, for example.

This new initiative builds on public education campaigns the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) has conducted with the Ad Council around the theme "Questions Are the Answer."

### A New Series Of Videos

An original series of new videos on the AHRQ website, [www.ahrq.gov/questions](http://www.ahrq.gov/questions), features real patients and clinicians discussing the importance of asking questions and sharing information.

"I used to think, he's a doctor, who am I to ask a question?" said Bill Lee, a patient from Baltimore, who is featured in one of the videos. Lee, who has suffered 10 heart attacks since 2004, noted that good communication is the



**"If I had not started asking questions of my clinicians, I honestly think I'd be dead today," said Bill Lee, right, with his clinician Jane Kapustin, Ph.D.**

key to successfully managing his heart disease and diabetes. "If I had not started asking questions of my clinicians, I honestly think I'd be dead today."

The website also features new resources to help patients be prepared before, during and after their medical appointments. The resources include:

- An interactive "Question Builder" tool that enables patients to create, prioritize and print a personalized list of questions based on their health condition.

- A new brochure, titled "Be More Involved in Your Health Care: Tips for Patients," that offers helpful suggestions to follow before, during and after a visit.

- Notepads designed for use in medical offices to help patients prioritize the top three questions they wish to address during their appointment.

Said AHRQ Director Carolyn M. Clancy, M.D., "This campaign reminds us all that effective communication between patients and their health care team is important and that it is possible—even when time is limited."