Caring Docs Retain Patients

August 6, 2013 By Benjamin Ryan

Clinicians who boast better interpersonal skills are more likely to keep their HIV patients retained in care, according to a study of over 1,300 patients at an urban HIV clinic in Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Researchers found that patients were more likely to keep appointments if they felt their care providers knew them as people, treated them with dignity and respect, listened carefully to them and provided easily understood explanations.

On average, the study participants made it to about two-thirds of their clinic appointments. Patients of care providers who rated higher in these qualities kept their appointments at about a 6 to 7 percent higher rate than the patients of clinicians who rated more poorly.

Acknowledging that doctors have a tendency to “use a lot of jargon,” Tabor Flickinger, MD, MPH, a fellow at Johns Hopkins, advises patients to speak up if they feel the clinicians are lacking in any of these key areas. “Sometimes,” she says,“doctors may not even realize that they’re coming across a certain way.”

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