Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Using Behavioral Economics to Encourage Parent Behavior Change: Opportunities to Improve Clinical Effectiveness.

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Pediatric clinical practice often involves improving child health by changing parents' behavior. Strategies from behavioral economics - a field that leverages predictable patterns in human decision-making to overcome barriers to behavior change - can improve health outcomes in adults. Though more research is needed, the application of these approaches to parent behavior change in pediatric settings has the potential to improve the clinical effectiveness of child healthcare. We review the foundational concepts of behavioral economics and identify the unique role of pediatricians in motivating parent behavior change. We then discuss how to apply four key strategies in practice - message framing, use of defaults, enhanced active choice, and harnessing social forces - to support parent decision-making to improve child health. Leveraging behavioral economic principles around parental decision-making has the potential to supercharge program effectiveness and improve patient and family health.

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