Chapter 1

PATIENT EMPOWERMENT


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An osteopathic family physician who was treating a career military man for myofascial pain, had an allopathic medical student shadowing him.

In conversation, the man mentioned to the student that he always preferred to be treated by DOs.

When asked why, he responded, "Because they listen better."

The patient chose to travel more than 50 miles to be treated for chronic myofascial pain because he felt DOs were good listeners.

As osteopathic family physicians, we need to be good listeners!

Respecting patients’ perspectives:
- makes them part of the treatment team.
- empowers them to seek solutions to their own medical issues.
The empowered patient is:

- a collegial member of the healthcare team seeking the most effective therapeutic plan.
- a stakeholder in the success of the treatment.

The empowered patient is NOT:

- just the subject of the plan.
- just the sufferer.

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**Respect**

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**Getting Started**

- Start with good listening.
- The physician must assist patients in getting past barriers to their own healing.
- The patient must develop a personal commitment to the plan for their own recovery.

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**Getting Started**

- Ensure that patients are partners in the development of their own care plan.
- This partnership is easily fostered through a patient-centered medical practice.
Two Models

The Physician-Centered Model:
- Parent-Child transaction.\(^1\)
- The patient is passive, depending upon the doctor’s advice and judgment.
- The relationship is unequal.

Physician-Centered Model:
- This model assumes that a rational argument is sufficient to persuade patients to change their behavior.
- The primary reason for failure is the "bad, non-compliant patient who won’t do what the doctor says."
**Two Models**

**Physician-Centered Model:**
- The patient who gathers outside materials challenges the veracity of the physician.
- Energy in this model is expended in getting patients to comply.

**Patient-Centered Model:**
- This is an Adult-Adult transaction.¹
- The patient is an equal partner.
- Goal: To elicit and satisfy the patients’ expressed needs as a first step to their taking greater control over their own health.

**Patient-Centered Model:**
- The patient is involved in decision making.
- This model encourages patient self-reliance.
- Energy in this model is spent encouraging patients to share and reflect on their existing understanding as a basis for future learning.
Two Models

Patient-Centered Model:
- The patient as the "primary physician," monitoring their body continuously.
- When something is awry, the patient attempts to determine what may be the problem.
- The patient decides what to do about it.
- They watch for the desired outcome.

Patient-Centered Model:
- The patient seeks counsel when the problem is outside of their knowledge, ability or experience to diagnose and treat.
- The physician must respect the fact that a patient has exceeded their knowledge and work collegially with them.

Patient-Centered Model:
Physicians should treat the patient the way they would like to be treated by a consultant when they refer a patient to them.
Teams take one of three basic forms:

1. Synergistic team
   - Exploits ideas and participation from each member and seeks to reach a set of conclusions superior to what any team member could do alone.

2. Leader-follower team
   - Designates one member as the expert who autonomously selects the set of conclusions for the team

3. Antagonistic team
   - Internal conflict, personal interest, and politicking attempt to compromise the set of conclusions that often are inferior to what members could have achieved individually
Teaming-Up with the Patient

If osteopathic family physicians wish to be part of a synergistic team as patients are empowered they must follow two basic rules:

1. There is no room for ego in clinical encounters!
2. Empowering the patient does not abrogate the responsibility of the clinician. Each combination of patient and illness will require a unique interplay among the team members.

The Physician Represents the Osteopathic Profession

Fewer than 5 percent of all physicians in the United States have an osteopathic professional degree.

As with any minority, the actions of one represent many. The empowering DO may well engender a positive reflection on the entire profession.

References