

# Shifting From ‘Patient-Centered’ to ‘Patient-Wanted’ Approach

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The relationship between physicians and patients in medical decision-making and ensuring positive clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction. With the growing influence of the internet and social media on health topics, this relationship is evolving—and sometimes not in a way that benefits our patients. While there's a lot of research on the physician-patient relationship, there hasn't been much focus on the gaps in care that arise when patients turn to online medical information.

Many patients today rely on the internet as their primary source of medical information, rather than consulting their health care providers. Some patients and their families seek out trustworthy sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, patient education pamphlets, and reputable health websites. Access to this evidence-based information empowers them to make informed decisions about their health, and these patients are often more knowledgeable about their medical conditions and more actively involved in their treatment choices.

However, many individuals unknowingly place their trust in unreliable medical information found online. In their search for quick

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answers, patients often resort to random Google searches, which may lead them to misleading or inaccurate information. This reliance can foster confusion and mistrust in treatment plans, especially considering the generally low

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health literacy across the US. Unfortunately, there is minimal oversight over the quality of medical content available on the internet.

It is increasingly common for patients to arrive at doctor's appointments with self-diagnoses based on their own online research or advice from social media. This undermines a doctor's ability to perform a thorough evaluation, as patients may become less transparent about their medical histories or reluctant to consider other potential diagnoses. Instead, they may focus on demanding specific tests or medications, which ultimately delays the path to accurate diagnoses and appropriate treatment. This growing trend is particularly concerning for patients with complex conditions, as appointment time may be spent clarifying misunderstandings rather than addressing the comprehensive care they need.

Moreover, some patients seek specialist referrals for conditions that may not require such evaluations, driven by unreliable online sources. This not only complicates the work of primary care providers but also diverts cru-

cial resources away from those patients who truly need specialized care and are waiting for essential services.

A patient-centered approach, which fosters better communication, can help patients more

effectively express their concerns and enhance the clinician-patient relationship. When patients arrive with preconceived notions, it is vital for clinicians to take the time to thoroughly explain care plans that prioritize the patient's best interests. Sharing the latest evidence-based research empowers patients to make informed decisions about their treatment options.

Clinicians should encourage patients to seek credible information and provide educational materials to enhance their understanding of their health conditions. It is equally important for patients and their families to engage by asking questions and participating in care planning. During these discussions, clinicians should inquire about the sources of the patient's information and ensure that it is evidence-based, which can reduce conflicts in decision-making. Ultimately, delivering the best possible care hinges on empathetic listening and collaborative treatment planning.

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