

7 Things Physicians Should Never Say to Patients

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Don't Say:

“Let's not worry about that for now!”

Why Not?

- ⇒ One of the major causes of medical malpractice litigation is a failure to have meaningful, empathetic conversations with patients.
- ⇒ Patients often interpret responses like this as dismissive of their concerns, and can harm their relationship with their physician.

Don't Say:

“Thanks for bringing in that info from the Internet. I think it's best if you let me diagnose you, though.”

Why Not?

In this example, there's no effort made to understand the patient's views or respect them as a partner in the treatment decision-making process.

Don't Say:

“You need to calm down!”

Why Not?

- ⇒ Telling an angry patient to calm down can have the opposite effect.
- ⇒ The best approach is to give the patient time to calm down, show the patient you take them seriously and acknowledge the source of the anger.

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Don't Say:

“Do You Understand?”

Why Not?

- ⇒ Many patients will respond to this simple question with a yes regardless of whether they actually understand.
- ⇒ Instead, ask: “I’s like to make sure I've explained things clearly, would you mind explaining in your own words what you understand of our discussion?”.

Don't Say:

“ Oh, don't worry about that. Most patients in your situation feel this way.”

Why Not?

When physicians explain away patient distress as normal, it can prevent further patient disclosure.

Don't Say:

“I'm running late today do let's get right to it.”

Why Not?

- ⇒ Physicians are subjected to enormous time pressures, and patients understand this too.
- ⇒ Patients who feel hurried may withhold crucial information necessary for clinical care and may feel more hesitant of asking questions

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because they don't want to waste the doctor's time.

⇒ Do not appear rushed, even if you are.

Don't Say:

Anything too quickly

Why Not?

- ⇒ One of the best ways to indicate that you are listening is silence. Don't rush to respond too quickly.
- ⇒ Consider waiting two extra seconds—you never know what the patient may say.