

# 7 Things Physicians Should Never Say to Patients

---

## November 18, 2019

Saying the wrong thing to a patient can harm that relationship or in a worst case scenario, even contribute to a malpractice lawsuit.

Here are some tips on things physicians should never say to their patient, and advice on what to say instead.

### 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.

### Don't say:

"Do you understand?"

### Why not?

# 7 Things Physicians Should Never Say to Patients

---

## Cont'd

- ⇒ Many patients will respond to this simple question with a yes regardless of whether they actually understand.
- ⇒ Instead, ask: "I'd 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 so 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 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.