

Suggested Strategies to Improve Communication Between Providers and Patients During the Office Visit

Excerpted, with permission, from a presentation at the Institute for Healthcare Improvement by

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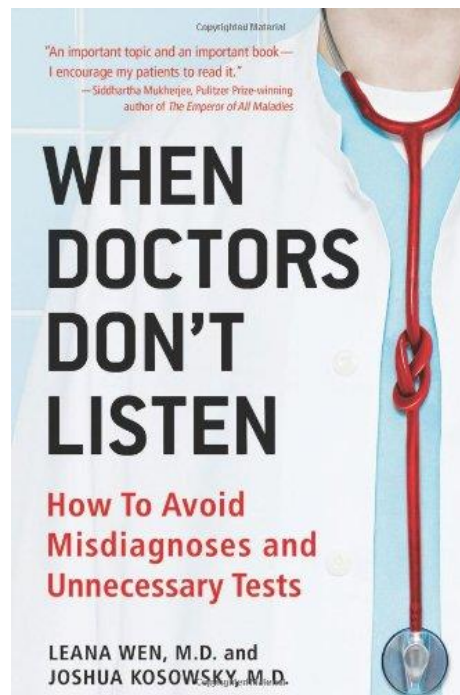
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[When Doctors Don't Listen: How to Avoid Misdiagnoses and Unnecessary Tests](#)

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<http://www.whendoctorsdontlisten.com>



Suggested strategies to improve communication between providers and patients during the office visit

| <u>Patients</u> | <u>Providers</u> |
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| <u>#1. Establish an active partnership</u> | |
| Set expectations Partner in your decision-making Ask to share in the thought process | Set expectations Involve patients in decision-making Explain your thought process |
| <u>#2. Focus on the diagnosis</u> | |
| Know why it is important Ask for the most likely diagnosis Explore other possibilities | Explain why it is important Explain the working diagnosis Discuss other possibilities |
| <u>#3. Listen</u> | |
| Tell a good story <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Story, not symptoms - Begin at the beginning - Use your own voice Come prepared <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write it down - Practice - Bring an advocate | Really listen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “No questions asked” - Beyond the chief complaint Encourage preparation |
| <u>#4. Understand every test ordered</u> | |
| Ask about diagnosis before tests are done Understand why a test is being ordered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is it looking for? - What are the risks? - What are the alternatives? - What happens if it’s negative? | Explain diagnosis Ask yourself, for every test <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How will it change my patient’s management? - Do I need it? - How do I explain risks/benefits? - Is watchful waiting an option? |

For more information, please see Dr. Wen’s website at <http://www.drleanawen.com> and read her book, *When Doctors Don’t Listen: How to Avoid Misdiagnoses and Unnecessary Tests*.