

Your Doctor Said

WHAT?

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Exposing The Communication Gap



Doctor-Patient Communication “Are All TV-Recommended Drugs Right For You?”

Why you can't automatically assume a certain drug is right for you just because the TV said it is!

You know what we're talking about here. The TV ads that show every drug in the most favorable light – beautiful people taking it, not a care in the world that the drug can't solve, beautiful homes – you know, everything would be absolutely perfect in your life if you just didn't have this condition. But since you do have the condition, then all you need to do to have your perfect life again is take this medicine!

The ads make life seem so simple – so easy as long as you take what they are recommending. Is life really like that? Are medical conditions that easy to fix? Will your life be perfect again (was it perfect before?) once you start taking this medicine?

Probably not. Many of these drugs will help you and decrease the problems of your medical issue. But if you ever just stop looking at the pretty pictures and listen to the “this drug may cause x, y, z side effects”. Many of the side effects are more intolerable than the effects of the illness. Some will subside after taking it for awhile but sometimes it's impossible to even get that far. There can be adverse effects too.

Then there's the cost. Most non-generic drugs nowadays are unbelievably expensive (the drug companies have lots of cost in research and development but I compare them to the big oil companies that raise and lower gas prices at will). Your insurance may or may not pay for them.

I'm just watching an ad for a drug that says it stayed behind the pharmacy counter – refused to change its prescription – as if that was the moral thing to do and that company refused to compromise its integrity. But, it ended with “still no prescription needed”. So, what does that really mean? Did it actually change something in order to become available without prescription or wasn't it ever ‘strong’ enough to require a prescription. But looking at the ad, you see people out in the fields playing Frisbee and spending time with the kids, etc, etc...it's the ideal life, it seems...all from taking this one drug. But I'm more confused after listening to the ad than I was before for the above reasons.

There can be other dangers not evident in the TV ad too. There's one ad that shows how easy it is to take this drug in a quick dissolve strip. It shows men driving around in a truck and if you're not looking closely you might think it's ok to take this and drive – whereas

when you take it in pill form, it causes drowsiness. There is no reason that the quick strip won't cause drowsiness too but there's no warning about that and it gives it a benign appearance – like a breath strip. The danger of this is intuitive if you stop and think about it (if you can use breath strips repeatedly, why not these? And that's extremely dangerous).

It may be also that this particular drug is not right for your illness. For example, your condition may not be at the right stage yet to require this heavy a drug (and that's something that you should be grateful for). Or, it could be that the doctor has already tried a drug similar to this and it hasn't worked or has caused bad side effects and therefore this advertised drug is contraindicated for you. But these ads make it seem as if you're going to die or be a 'reject' if you don't get THIS drug prescribed for you! The drug implies that your life will be horrible if you don't get it – no Frisbee with the kids for you.

One of the greatest nightmares for doctors is patients coming in telling them that they MUST HAVE this drug (because they saw it on TV). They will accept nothing else and will not listen when the doctor tries to explain why it might not be the best choice at this point in time. The patient already has their mind made up and there is nothing that can be said that will change it. After all, if it's on the TV, it must be ok. Often times, even if they will accept another drug from the doctor, their mind is already made up and the alternative drug doesn't work because it's not given a chance. There is a large psychological aspect to medicine – in everyone. The mind is a very powerful thing. .but that's a subject for another article.

The doctor may give in and prescribe the requested drug. But, not necessarily with great joy. Most would not give something that is downright dangerous or wrong but there are often times many other alternatives that should be tried first.

It's best to listen to your doctor and talk with him/her about the drug you saw on TV. Often times you can do research on the internet and if you want, you can bring internet info in for the doctor to look at. Be persistent when trying to find out if it's the right drug for you or not. But make sure you respect the doctor's opinion if it's not felt to be the one for you right now. If you respect your doctor, show it by listening to his advice. There are so many different treatments for things in this day and age that a milder or cheaper drug might work just as well.

Dr. Wurzbacher is a retired Navy Emergency Medicine Physician who recognized about early in her career that she wasn't good at communication and more importantly that she was probably missing much of what her patients were trying to tell her. Although she was excellent at diagnosing conditions, patients generally need more than that. The Emergency Department is one (of many) places that being good at communication is essential since you have no records to work with and a short amount of time to glean

information and make a diagnosis. So, she worked diligently at learning to really HEAR what her patients were telling her. Teaching young doctors and ancillary staff the personal aspects of medicine has become a passion of hers. Her book, "*Your Doctor Said What*" is intended to help patients not only understand why many doctors seem like aliens but also how to empower themselves to deal with them.

Check her out at <http://www.yourdoctorsaidwhat.com> and <http://www.yourdoctorsaidwhatblog.com> .