Wellness Forum Health

**not just *different* healthcare,**

**but healthcare that *makes a difference*!**

# InforMED Health 201 Class III

**Pamela A. Popper, Ph.D., N.D.**

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# Choosing Healthcare Providers

# Choosing Providers

- Doctors
- Nurse practitioners, physician assistants
- Personal trainers, yoga teachers
- Physical therapists
- Psychologists/counselors
- Chiropractors
- Pedigree less important than competence/track record
- Ask friends for referrals
- Interview potential providers
- Use the same strategies you use to hire landscapers, babysitters, auto mechanics, and any other professional you trust with something important to you!

# Choosing Your Doctor

- You do not need a “plant-based doctor” or a doctor who agrees with you on all matters
- You are looking for a provider who is willing:
  - to engage in collaborative, evidence-based discussions with you
  - to provide you with evidence to support recommendations
  - to perform diagnostic tests only when they are warranted
  - to respect and support your decisions regarding how you choose to take care of yourself

# Choosing Doctors: Questions to Ask

- How much time do you generally spend with your patients?
- How long does it take to get an appointment with you if I have a problem?
- Will you correspond with me via email to answer health care questions?
- What types of diagnostic tests do you recommend to your patients?
- How will you respond if I tell you that I choose not to have a particular test performed?

# Choosing Doctors: Questions to Ask

- I generally do not like to take pharmaceutical drugs, and in the event that I am diagnosed with a condition that does not involve an emergency, might be inclined to seek advice about other options for treatment, such dietary intervention or therapeutic fasting. Are you comfortable with this and can I expect that you will respect my decisions?
- Do you allow pharmaceutical reps to buy lunches, dinners, and to provide other entertainment for you and your staff? Do you teach continuing education programs for pharmaceutical companies? Do you conduct drug trials or other research for drug companies?

Note: An affirmative answer would not necessarily eliminate the doctor, but this disclosure would be important as you consider his/her recommendations.

# Choosing a Doctor: Questions to Ask

- If you have already been diagnosed with a condition and are taking drugs for it, you should ask this question:

  "I am now in the process of significantly improving my diet and lifestyle as a means for improving my health. I would like to discontinue the use of medications as soon as possible, or at the very least, reduce the dosages as much as possible. Will you assist me in doing this?"
- What types of diet and lifestyle recommendations do you make to your patients?
- How did you develop these recommendations – books, lectures, etc. (which people and organizations influence your doctor's thoughts and practices?)

# Annual Physical Exams

The Canadian Task Force on Periodic Health Examination, the American College of Physicians, the American Medical Association, the US Preventive Services Task Force and the US Public Health Service have all concluded that routine physicals for healthy adults are a waste of time and money


"The periodic health examination. Canadian Task Force on the Periodic Health Examination." *Can Med Assoc J.* 1979 Nov 3;121(9):1193-254.

"Periodic health examination: a guide for designing individualized preventive health care in the asymptomatic patients. Medical Practice Committee, American College of Physicians." *Ann Intern Med.* 1981 Dec;95(6):729-32.

Hayward, R, Steinberg, E, Ford D, Roizen, M, Roach, K. "Preventive care guidelines: 1991. American College of Physicians. Canadian Task Force on the Periodic Health Examination." United States Preventive Services Task Force. *Ann Intern Med.* 1991 May 1;114(9):758-83.

"Medical evaluations of healthy persons. Council on Scientific Affairs." *JAMA.* 1983 Mar 25;249(12):1626-33

Oboler, S, Prochazka A, Gonzalez, R, Xu, S, Anderson R. "Public expectations and attitudes for annual physical examinations and testing". *Ann Intern Med.* 2002 May 7;136(9):652-9.

# Annual Physical Exams

- A survey of physicians reported that 2/3 of doctors still recommend annual physical exams and 2/3 of patients consider them a necessity
- Annual exams could be productive if they focused on analysis of behaviors in order to make improvements that would reduce risk of disease

Prochazka, A, Lundahl, K, Pearson, W et al. "Support of Evidence-Based Guidelines for the Annual Physical Examination: a Survey of Primary Care Providers." *Arch Intern Med.* 2005;165:1347-1352

Oboler, S, Prochazka A, Gonzalez, R, Xu, S, Anderson R. "Public expectations and attitudes for annual physical examinations and testing". *Ann Intern Med.* 2002 May 7;136(9):652-9.

# The Annual Exam

According to Ezekiel Emanuel:

Annual exam persists because it is a habit and habits are hard to break; and also because of stories – most people know someone who claims to have been saved due to a minor abnormality detected early and treated successfully. But based on what we know about over-diagnosis and overtreatment, many of these stories are being told by people who really were not sick.

Ezekiel Emanuel "Skip Your Annual Physical." *New York Times* Jan 8 2015 http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/09/opinion/skip-your-annual-physical.html?emc=edit_th_20150109&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=38954395&_r=0

# The Annual Exam

- Annual exams could be productive if conducted as a review and included discussion about:
  - Diet
  - Exercise
  - Sleep
  - Stress
  - Weight/body composition
  - Professional, personal satisfaction
  - Social connections
  - Family and relationships
  - Development of proactive strategies to address health issues

# Stay Out of the Medical Mill!

- Disease mongering – the practice of expanding the definition of disease so that more people qualify for a “diagnosis” and require “treatment”
- Visit doctors when you are sick; avoid them when you are well
- Excessive testing results in illness being diagnosed based on the *appearance* of abnormalities, not on symptoms
- Leads to over-diagnosis; over-diagnosed patients do not benefit from treatment because they will not develop symptoms or die from their “conditions”
- Avoid the false sense of security that accompanies testing and being told that you are “fine”
- Avoid the over-diagnosis that results in over-treatment that follows testing
- Testing often takes healthy people and turns them into sick patients

# The Reimbursement Myth

- We have been taught that we must be reimbursed for all medical services in order to have good care and to afford good care – not true
- Consumers maintain cars and houses with their own money and use reimbursement for extraordinary expenses – same concept can apply to health
- Cost of MRI with insurance $2000-$2500; without insurance $300
- Many people can afford to make better choices outside the reimbursement system

# The Reimbursement Myth

- Average annual cost of care for type 2 diabetic: $11,777
  - Patient with insurance has a deductible to satisfy, co-pays for care and prescription drugs
  - Assume 20% shared cost = $2340
  - Cost of WFH membership and Concierge Healthcare average $499; most likely reverse type 2 diabetes
  - First year savings $1872 PLUS reduced food bill

# Concierge Practice

- Used to be for the wealthy – high fees
- Now available to almost all consumers
- Consumer pays a provider flat fee for unlimited access, including phone and email
- Allows patients to be more proactive about health, allows providers to include educational programs and services that are not normally reimbursable

# Exercise/Athletics

- Humans are designed to move – today's occupations and lifestyles do not result in sufficient movement
- "Being active" – cleaning house, weeding gardens, walking dogs – not a substitute for exercise
- Learn to be comfortable with discomfort
- Humans acclimate to physical activity
- You will hate it until you like it
- Consistency is important in order to get results
- Practice does not make perfect; practice makes permanent – choosing good instructors very important

# Choosing a Personal Trainer

- The best don't usually work at chains or large gyms
- They have their own facilities or work in private, smaller facilities
- Train or have trained professional athletes
- Have extensive training in physiology and/or have trained/apprenticed with someone who has
- More expensive than trainers in "regular" gyms

# Questions to Ask

- Where did you get your training?
- How long have you been training people?
- How many people like me have you worked with (injured, overweight, whatever your condition is)
- How long is a usual workout with you?
- How many times per week do you like to see your clients?
- What is your training philosophy?
- How hard do you push your clients?

# Assessing Competence

- The first appointment should involve some assessment to evaluate strength, detect imbalances, injuries or points of weakness
- Good trainers
  - make constant corrections
  - will push you to do more than you will do on your own
  - change the routine frequently
- You will most likely experience muscle soreness, particularly in the beginning
- Your body will start to change within a few weeks of beginning your new workout program
- Clear sign your training program is ineffective – your body is not getting stronger, leaner and noticeably different!

# Training Alternatives

- Training with a small group
- Periodic private workouts to change routine
- Virtual training

# Finding a Yoga Teacher

- Type of yoga classes you choose can be based on your personal preferences
- More benefit from physically aggressive forms of yoga
- Heat promotes safety and faster progress
- Most important thing - find a good yoga teacher who can help you to get better at the yoga and prevent injuries

# Good Yoga Teachers

- Provide detailed instruction
- Walk around the room and offer individual correction
- Have been trained in small groups over a long period of time
- Participate in ongoing training
- Class is quiet, controlled, disciplined
- Students encouraged to participate in other physical activities

# Ways to Get Hurt in Yoga Class

- Shrugging the shoulders up to the ears during poses – inhibits movement, places additional stress on the shoulder and neck muscles
- Arching the lower back or throwing the middle body forward
- Placing the arms too far behind the ears, which juts the head forward, causing neck injuries
- Weight too far back in the heels in any balancing pose on a straight leg results in injuries to knees, hamstrings, Achilles tendon
- Knees crossing forward over toes can injure knees
- Pigeon toes in any pose
- Rounded back, which pulls the shoulders and can exacerbate scoliosis
- Hip misalignment

# Physical Therapy

- Goals
  - Address WHOLE body biomechanics/symmetry and function
  - Correct alignment
  - Restore postural efficiency
  - Regain muscle symmetry
  - Re-establish functional movement patterns
- Can often be accomplished with exercise – yoga, strength training

# Finding a Good Physical Therapist

- Good PT's consider the entire body when evaluating patients - important, since the joint or muscle that is causing pain is often not the source of the pain
  - Bad posture leading to a strained neck can cause pain in the ankle, for example
  - Therapists who are not trained to evaluate the entire body and to identify the source of the pain are not very effective
- Good PT's perform manual therapy
- Good PT's provide exercises/movements for patients to do at home and on their own

# Finding a Physical Therapist

- One particularly effective method of physical therapy is M.E.L.T.
- The M.E.L.T Method® (MELT) is a self-treatment technique that helps prevent pain and heal injury
- MELT simulates the hands-on techniques that good therapists use to restore musculoskeletal health
- You can learn more about this method and find a local practitioner at www.meltmethod.com

# Psychological Issues

- Most mental health therapy does not help much – turns people who have issues with relationships and life into chronic patients who attend therapy for life and often take drugs
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - safe, effective, requires few sessions, almost never involves drugs
- More focused on the present, more time-limited, and more problem-solving oriented
- Patients learn specific skills that they can use for the rest of their lives - identifying distorted thinking, modifying beliefs, relating to others in different ways, and changing behaviors

# The Cognitive Model

- Events have no meaning
- Humans attach meaning to events
- The way we perceive and process events leads to responses
- Perceptions and processing can be changed in order to change emotional responses
- Patients learn how to become their own therapists – identify their thoughts, assess, and change when necessary
- Positive change usually begins within in a few weeks

# Finding a Cognitive Therapist

- Many claim to offer CBT, but few have specialized training
- Important to interview therapists

Questions to ask and “right” answers:

- Why do you think CBT is the best therapy?

  Works quickly, empowers patients to help themselves, drugs not used, duration of therapy not long, low recidivism rate

- What training have you received in cognitive therapy?

  Reading, seminars, continuing education programs, internship, certification programs through Beck Institute or allied organizations

# Finding a Cognitive Therapist

- Tell me what to expect

  Patients learn to help themselves, are given assignments and are taught to observe their own thoughts and behaviors, most work is done in between sessions by patient, journaling and workbooks are common

- What do you think of drugs?

  Never or almost never a good idea

- How long should I expect to be in therapy?

  Varies from person to person but 14-24 sessions is average

# Chiropractic Care

- Chiropractic care can be helpful for pain relief
- Focuses on disorders of the musculoskeletal system and the nervous system, and the effects of these disorders on general health
- Used most often to treat neuro-musculoskeletal issues like back pain, neck pain, pain in the joints of the arms or legs, and headaches
- Most common therapeutic procedure -“spinal manipulation,” or “chiropractic adjustment” - restores joint mobility by manually applying a controlled force into joints that have become less mobile

# Finding a Chiropractor

- How do you assess patients?
- How often do you see new patients?
- What is the duration of care for most patients?
- Be cautious if:

  Chiropractor recommends multiple visits per week or long-term or lifetime regular treatment

  Makes claims that chiropractic can cure “everything”

# Other Providers

- Nutritionists/dietitians
- Acupuncturists
- Herbalists
- Homeopathic practitioners
- Naturopaths
- Integrative medical providers
- Functional Medicine providers
- “Alternative” does not always or even usually mean better
- Learn to spot “reductionism,” over-testing, over-diagnosis, over-treatment
- New is not always better
- More is not always better
- Being InforMED can help to protect you from unnecessary and harmful healthcare

# Alternative Medicine

- Common terms to describe practices:
  - CAM
  - Integrative
  - Holistic
  - Functional Medicine
  - Homeopathic
  - Naturopathic
- Often advertise themselves as being “early adopters”
- Are often “holistic pharmacists”
  - Address symptoms instead of cause using supplements instead of drugs
  - Patients are harmed less but do not get meaningfully better

# Alternative Practitioners

- Often use even more unproven testing methods
- Are just as resistant to change when evidence refutes practices; examples:
  - Thermography
  - Vitamin D
  - Omega-3 fatty acids
- Reasons why patients like alternative practitioners better
  - Perceived as less harmful
  - Practitioners often spend more time, friendlier
  - Placebo effect of “niceness”

# Alternative Medicine

- Reason for any test or treatment should be because it leads to a better outcome
- All medical practices should stand on their own – the reasons for any test or treatment should not because it is less harmful or less toxic; should be because it leads to a desirable outcome – resolving health issue, increasing quality of life and longevity