

7. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PATIENT PERSPECTIVE

Outcome measures for the results of clinical treatment have traditionally been estimated by looking at survival, clinical events, physiological measures, and test results. However, these are not directly relevant to an individual patient who is more concerned about overall wellbeing, daily functioning, dealing with symptoms, satisfaction with care, and possibly giving meaning to the illness s/he is experiencing. Quality of care is thus closely correlated with the patient perspective which, in the interest of expanding the new field of person-centred care, should be included in a case report when relevant.

“Illness is a culturally and socially shaped construct, one in which perception and experience of disease is affected by explanations of sickness and the systems of meaning that are used to comprehend this experience.”¹

Beyond symptomology and survival, perceptions of disease causality and related health-seeking behaviour vary according to culture and environment. Explanatory models exist for exploring and examining these variations. The patient’s perspective can add valuable information to your case report, especially as concerns patient education and health promotion. Always remember to tailor your request for informed consent to the patient and his/her environment, and make sure s/he understands. Also, the moment at which you ask the patient about his/her experience of disease and build a relationship of trust, can be the best moment to ask for informed consent.

Remember that illness, disease, and diagnosis does not happen in a void: beyond the individual patient lie his/her family and community.

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¹ Daaleman, T. P., Cobb, A. K., & Frey, B. B. (2001). Spirituality and well-being: an exploratory study of the patient perspective. In *Social Science & Medicine* (Vol. 53).

