

What doctors want? A consultation method when the patient is a doctor

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Abstract

Doctors face many barriers accessing health care. Even after a doctor has adopted the patient role, quality health care can remain elusive.

This study investigated the consultation between the treating doctor and the doctor-patient. We aimed to determine what doctors want within the consultation, their preferred consultation method.

This qualitative study involved 37 GPs who participated in one of six independently facilitated focus groups. Data were recorded, transcribed and analysed for recurrent themes using an iterative inductive framework.

Participants emphasised the importance of, and the difficulty in, establishing a relationship with a GP. This involved determining who to see and when to go to the doctor.

Specific ways of strengthening the doctor–patient relationship were discussed, including understanding the illness experience, acknowledging the whole patient, setting boundaries, providing holistic care, developing rapport and participating in shared decision making.

Empathy was especially important.

Analysis revealed strong similarities with the ‘patient-centred consultation method’.

Understanding the preferred consultation method for doctors will assist doctors in providing quality care to their peers. This is an important step in enhancing health access for doctors.

Doctors want what patients want: care delivered within a patient-centred consultation.

These insights may help other health professionals when treating or receiving care from their colleagues.

Keywords: attitude of health personnel, health behaviour, physician health, qualitative research.

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