This program is sponsored by the International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders. The views and opinions expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect the official position of IFFGD. Information and resources shared should not replace any medical care you are receiving. Finally, it is important to always consult with your doctor or other health care provider before making decisions about your treatment.

The following slides were presented during the educational portion of IFFGD’s 2020 Virtual Advocacy Event. To view this presentation and the all videos available during this program, please visit https://bit.ly/Adv_Edu.

What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

What do healthcare providers wish people would ask?

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Before you leave the office (telemedicine) visit

Objectives

• Confirm your diagnosis
• Verify the evaluation and treatment plan, expectations
• Clarify the next steps/milestones
• Define the communication and follow-up strategy
• Solidify your patient-physician relationship

What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

1. Diagnosis and Testing
2. Treatment and Follow-up
What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

*Diagnosis and Testing*

1. “What is my diagnosis?”
   - Symptoms are not Diagnoses

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**Symptoms vs. Diagnoses**

**Common pain-related SYMPTOMS**
- Headache
- Palpitations
- Chest pain
- Stomach pain
- Bowel discomfort
- Back pain
- Menstrual cramps
- Bladder burning/pain
- Painful intercourse

**Common pain-related DIAGNOSES**
- Major depression disorder
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Temporomandibular joint pain (TMJ)
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Fibromyalgia
- Migraine headache
- Mitral valve prolapse
- Non-cardiac chest pain
- Functional dyspepsia
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Hemiated disc
- Dysmenorrhea
- Interstitial cystitis
- Dyspareunia

*Why is this distinction important?*
What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

Diagnosis and Testing

1. “What is my diagnosis?”
   - Symptoms are not Diagnoses
   - Patients given a formal diagnosis are more likely to receive effective, evidence based-treatments*
   - Facilitates learning more about your condition
   - It is OK to not be 100% certain at the initial visit
   - “Are there other/additional diagnoses that you are still considering?”


Be Active. Be Heard. Make a Difference.
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*Diagnosis and Testing*

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2. “When and how will I receive my test results?”
   - Should you expect a call or mailed results?
   - Understand whether your provider participates in a patient portal
   - Never assume that “no news is good news”

3. “How do I best communicate with you and your office”?
   - Learn the name(s) of nursing and support staff
   - “Is it possible to speak directly with you in the event of questions/concerns?”
   - Use of an instant messaging system?

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What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

*Treatment and Follow-up*

1. “What are the expectations for this treatment plan?”
   “Which of my symptoms are expected to improve?”
   - Some treatments may more effectively address certain dimensions of the underlying disorder
   - Treatment may not eliminate symptoms, but often make them less severe or less bothersome
   - Most treatments for FGID do not offer prospect of a “cure”
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   ➢ Most treatments for FGID do not offer prospect of a “cure”

2. “How long will it take to gain a sense of whether this treatment option is effective/right for me?”
   ➢ Some symptoms may respond more quickly than others
   ➢ “What is the expected timeline for response?”
   ➢ Understand the options for dose adjustments/adjunct therapies

What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

3. “What are the side effects/adverse reactions I should watch out for”?
   ➢ Would these be expected to occur immediately?
   ➢ Will they likely get better if I do experience them?
   ➢ What should I do if I experience adverse effects (stop, adjust, call)?
What to ask your healthcare provider before you leave - what questions should you be sure to ask?

*Treatment and Follow-up*

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   - What should I do if I experience adverse effects (stop, adjust, call)?

4. “What are the next steps/milestones to monitor after today’s visit?”
   - Clarify the follow-up plan and timeline

“What do healthcare providers wish people would *ask*?

1. “Let me make sure I understand the diagnosis and plan”
   - Opportunity to make sure you and your provider are on the same page
   - Take notes!
“What do healthcare providers wish people would ask?

1. “Let me make sure I understand the diagnosis and plan”
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2. “Is there anything else I can do to help control my symptoms?”
   - Allopathic providers (traditional medicine) often focus heavily on medical therapies
   - Diet, sleep, exercise, and stress management all have proven benefit in improving many symptoms, such as pain

3. “Is it useful for me to track my diet, symptoms, etc?”

4. “What are the best sources of information to learn more about my condition?”
“What do healthcare providers wish people would say?”

“I trust your opinion and your recommendations”.
  ➢ Providers who feel trusted will work harder to earn/keep that trust
“I understand that this is a chronic condition, and it will take time to get better”.
“I don’t expect to be perfect. I just want to feel/function better than I am right now”.
  ➢ Demonstrate realistic expectations (timeline and overall response)
“I am going to work with you to get better”.
  ➢ Affirm your therapeutic alliance with your provider

In conclusion...

Your best chance in getting the best healthcare will come from you knowing:
1. What it is you want (introspection)
2. Where to go to get it (research)
3. How to ask for it (self advocacy)