

Do You Have an Ideal Relationship with Your Doctor? It's Up to You...

*“There is just one life for each of us: our own.”
--- Euripedes*

Aside from the obvious close relationships with your spouse and family members, the next most important person in your life, if you are a lung patient, is your doctor.

Have you analyzed your relationship with your pulmonary and primary care physicians lately? Do you come away from check-ups feeling informed, satisfied with your doctor's prescribed medical treatment program, and empowered about dealing with your own situation?

If not, perhaps you should take a good look at the relationship that exists between you and your doctor. And look just as hard at your own involvement as you do at his or her advice and consent.

As patients, we each have a responsible role to play in the management of our own illness. And we cannot fulfill that role if we are intimidated by the authority of physicians. We should, instead, propose an equal role of responsibility for ourselves -- letting the doctor know that we expect respect and consideration, just as we are prepared to give both to them and to their recommendations for treatment.

We should tell the doctor, up front, that we intend to be compliant with the medical treatment program that will be prescribed; but also, that we will have many questions that must be addressed in order for us to fully understand what is required of us, and what the desired results should be.

Most physicians will welcome an informed approach from their patients. A good doctor knows that the more you know about your illness, the better you will be able to manage it, and to hold onto as much quality of life as you can.

If you are less than satisfied with your ongoing relationship with your doctor, take the time to improve your knowledge of your illness, attending support group meetings and learning about lung disease from books and other sources. Some materials teach you ways to get more from each visit with your doctor. For example, make a list of questions that you might have about your illness or your treatment program. Ask the hard questions, but only if you are able to take the answers.

Let your physician know that you expect to be a full participant in the process of managing your lung disease. To make this happen requires that we ask for information and explanations, and that we wish to be actively involved in the decisions concerning us. If you are met with resistance, you may need to think about finding a doctor who will accept you as an equal partner! Nobody should have to stay with a doctor who is put off by questions and implies that the patient has no business asking questions about his or her own health. Remember, your doctor works for you. You “hire” him or her.

Once you are armed with the information, and the way to an improved, mutually respectful relationship with your physician, then it is up to you to make it happen. Hold up your end of the bargain, and watch your doctor "open up" with you.