

Physicians' moods affect quality of care: study

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A new study by a researcher at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU) reveals that physicians' moods impact the number of prescriptions, referrals and lab tests ordered, as well as the amount of time they spend talking with their patients.

The findings of the study "Communicating with Patients, Prescribing Medications and Referring to Tests and Specialists: Associations with Physician Burnout and Moods" were recently presented at the 14th International Conference of the Israel National Institute for [Health Policy](#) by Prof. Talma Kushnir, Department of the Sociology of Health, BGU Faculty of Health Sciences.

Prof. Kushnir surveyed 188 primary physicians in Israel to determine whether doctors changed their professional behavior on good mood days, as well as days when they felt stressed, tired or anxious. Physicians' burnout levels were also assessed. The study asked doctors to rank how their mood affected the extent they talked to patients, prescribed medications, sent them to lab or diagnostic tests and referred patients to a specialist.

Her findings show that a good or bad mood affected all five physician behaviors. On days the doctors felt positive moods, they spoke more to patients, wrote fewer prescriptions, ordered fewer tests and issued fewer referrals. However, when doctors were in a bad mood, they did the opposite. Additionally, if the physicians' burnout level was higher, their moods more strongly impacted their behaviors.

"The finding that on [bad mood](#) days physicians tend to talk less, and may needlessly prescribe and refer more than on good mood days, implies that negative moods may be detrimental to quality and costly to healthcare systems," says Prof. Kushnir. Conversely, positive moods that have the opposite effects may help contain costs."

Provided by American Associates, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

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