

Situation framing, language can influence decision-making

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(HealthDay)—How a situation is framed and the language used to

describe risks can influence patients' decision-making, according to an article published in *Physicians Practice*.

Patients tend to focus more strongly on the potential risk than the potential benefit; this is a phenomenon known as loss aversion bias. In addition, language that conveys emotion will attract people's attention, especially when the words have a negative connotation. Physicians should be aware that the way in which information is presented can influence risk perception.

In order to help [patients](#) decide upon a medical course of action, physicians should provide the risks of treatment and the risks of not having treatment to minimize loss aversion. In addition, how the situation is framed will affect decision-making; overuse of negative, emotionally laden words should be minimized. A patient who appears overly reluctant should be asked what is fueling their hesitancy; in addition, physicians should determine whether information from other sources such as the internet is contributing to their decision. Physicians should also be aware of their own biases and assumptions when they consider treatment options.

"When patients hear the potential risks of a procedure or treatment, the degree to which their [aversion](#) to risk is prominent will cause the risks to carry more weight than the benefits. This can lead to less effective [treatment](#) choices," according to the article.

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