

# Encouraging patients to follow doctors' recommendations

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As a laryngologist, I specialize in treating throat conditions. Often these are chronic and affect quality of life. Management, therefore, is often a combination of medical therapies with lifestyle changes.

Recently, a return patient came to see me in clinic. As I spoke to her, things seemed familiar. Her complaints were almost word-for-word what they were six months prior. When I asked her if she had tried my recommendations, she shook her head. I wondered, what had happened?

Why are some patients noncompliant? The answer to that can be quite complex.

There can be mistrust in the [health care system](#) or provider, limited access to care (transportation, days off, financial abilities), or even a misunderstanding of the directions given. Out-of-pocket costs can be cost-prohibitive even for over-the-counter medications. However, following recommendations is important. These are made not only to improve symptoms and quality of life, but in some cases, prevent progression of disease and illness.

## **So how should patients and providers navigate this dilemma?**

As a patient, I recommend speaking up and asking questions. This is your time to get clarification on terminology, diagnosis, alternative treatment options, and how treatment will affect you. Always review your after-visit summary.

As a [physician](#), I conclude the visit with a summary, but I also ask the patient to verbally do the same, reinforcing the plan. I provide written educational handouts on common topics for further reading. I schedule a follow-up. And finally, I work to create a safe space in which they can express concerns over the plan. I may not be able to address all the concerns, but I will try.

As [health care providers](#), we must remember that good care does not

only mean making the [correct diagnosis](#). It comes from the connection we make with our [patients](#) that empowers them to make the right decisions for themselves.

Provided by Rush University Medical Center

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