



Personalizing Your Health-care – Make it About You!

Betty Chaffee/ April 20, 2026/ Medication Management/ 0 comments

Each of us is unique. We have our own personalities, lifestyles, environments, and genetics. We may enjoy the same things as someone else, or not. Our bodies may respond to a particular medical treatment more efficiently than someone else's, or not. It's important that healthcare providers see each patient as an individual rather than as a disease that needs treatment. But how do we make that happen?

Personalized medicine allows the treatment to fit the person.

In years past, medicine tended to group people into categories based on their health problems. There were diabetics, hypertensives, heart failure patients, cancer patients, and others. A diagnosis would be followed by a plan to treat a disease, rather than a plan to treat a patient. The doctor would explain to the patient what they needed to do, and the patient was expected to comply. In those days, it was more or less thought that the doctor was in charge of the patient's health.

Personalized medicine puts you, the patient, in charge of your health. Yes, that's a big responsibility. And yes, you'll need help from your doctor as well as others on your healthcare team. But the advantages are immense. Now, instead of just considering a disease, other things that impact your health help determine the treatment plan. Things like lifestyle, environment, and genetics that make you different from others. And while genetics can be tested and documented, things like environment and lifestyle can be ever-changing. And sometimes those issues aren't obvious; they may even be neglected during doctor-patient conversations. Whose job is it to make sure these important issues are discussed and prioritized when making treatment decisions?



It's all about patient-provider communication!

Communication is the key to making medicine *personalized*. Healthcare providers can't know what people are able (and willing) to do unless it's discussed.

Here's an example: Let's say Jane Doe's blood pressure is higher than normal, and has been the last couple of office visits. Maybe her doctor would like to suggest she lose ten

pounds and start walking every day, but assumes that like many people Jane wouldn't want to do those things. So instead a medication is prescribed. But Jane thinks to herself, "I don't want to take medications!" and doesn't fill the prescription. At the follow up visit three months later, her blood pressure is still high and her health hasn't improved.

What if Jane had explained that she wants to avoid medications if at all possible? She and her doctor may have talked about lifestyle options for bringing her blood pressure down. She may have surprised her doctor (and maybe even herself) by realizing that she'd rather make small changes in her lifestyle than take a medication. Then they could have discussed how to start out on those changes, and what short-term and long-term goals she should shoot for. Together, they may have come up with a plan they could both get behind. The likelihood is that if they openly discussed options, Jane would be more likely to follow through with a treatment plan that she had a role in creating.

Let your healthcare provider know who you are and how treatment plans might fit your life (or not).

There are plenty of other examples of things that should be discussed with healthcare providers. What if an injectable medication is prescribed, but you're squeamish and reluctant to use an injection? What if your doctor prescribed a medication that needs to be taken three times a day and you know you just can't fit the middle dose in due to your daily schedule? Or your doctor recommends losing weight, but you've tried and tried and know that won't work for you? Bringing up your concerns will allow for a discussion about alternative treatments. Talking about those alternatives, and their pros and cons can help you and your healthcare provider come to an agreement about where to start.



Always ask what the treatment goal is.

Don't forget to talk about the goals of new (and old) treatments. Whether it's a goal blood pressure, goal blood sugar, goal weight, or anything else, it's important that you and your doctor are on the same page.

Chronic pain is a good example. Whether it's a knee, hip, or any other body part, what most of us yearn for is for the pain to just go away. Completely. So as patients, our goal may be zero pain. But healthcare providers may be looking at a different measure, like being able to walk farther, play on the floor with grandkids, or participate in more activities. Agreeing on a goal for pain relief can make it easier for both patient and provider to see if a treatment plan is working.

Don't be afraid to ask questions!



Many patients have told me that they're reluctant to ask questions of their doctors. There are common reasons - the doctor is too busy; the doctor may get angry; it might be a stupid question. There are plenty of reasons for not discussing treatment decisions with our providers. *But when discussion doesn't happen, personalized medicine won't happen, either.* Much of the responsibility for making

healthcare *personal* lies with the *person*.

Be the person who makes your healthcare personal!

And remember, Better My Meds can help answer your questions too! [Contact us](#) to get the best health outcomes from your medications!



Betty Chaffee, PharmD, is owner and sole proprietor of BetterMyMeds, a Medication Management service devoted to helping people get the maximum benefit from their medications.