

CONCEPTS OF MAKING A DIAGNOSIS AND CARING FOR A PATIENT

BY DR. JOSHUA KAYIMA

MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS (Dx or Ds)

- Is the process of determining which disease or condition explains a person's symptoms or signs.

ADVANTAGES OF KNOWING A DIAGNOSIS

- Make informed decision about treatment
- Allows us to inform patient about the disease condition
 - Express of condition
 - Complications
 - Management option
 - Prognosis
- Allows study of condition and compared with other centers os patients with the same diagnosis.

DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS

- Making a diagnosis is a complex cognitive task that involves logical thinking.

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR DIAGNOSIS

- Using – history, PE, laboratory tests, imaging studies and other tests to identify the disease responsible for the patient's complaint
- Background reasoning
 - Pattern recognition
 - Algorithmic
 - Hypothetic-deductive
 - Exhaustive.

PATTERN RECOGNITION

- Conditions that have a distinctive presentation e.g. cystitis (UTI), Hypothyroidism, Bell's palsy etc.
- It is suitable for a busy set up
- Good to have follow up to see if presumptive diagnosis is upheld by time progression
- One may 'jump' to a diagnosis without considering all possible diagnosis – (pitfall)

ALGORITHMIC APPROACH

- Uses flow charts and algorithms
- Piece information together in a flowing manner
- This information should be precise and reproducible e.g. laboratory data.

HYPOTHETICAL - DEDUCTIVE

- Start with multiple possibilities i.e. differential diagnoses
- Asking questions, and reviewing test results – refining the differential until a ‘working diagnosis’ is obtained in a step-like fashion
- It can be time-consuming to ask a question at a time, so many physicians, gather several pieces of information at a time e.g. edema

EXHAUSTIVE APPROACH

- Exhaustively ordering every tests you can think of that may provide information on a patient's condition
- Useful in patients with an unusual illness and when other modes of making a diagnosis are exhausted
- It can be cost-wasting
- Rarely used

- Most clinicians use a mix of pattern recognition, algorithmic and hypothetical-deductive approaches.

PATIENT + DOCTOR INTERACTION

- Patient comes with perceived health problems and believe the doctor will diagnose, treat and cure them.
- Patients have a fear of the unknown (hidden or apparent).
- Not all complaints are caused by physical ailment and not all ailments have got any complaints
- Treatment outcomes:
 - Cure
 - Control/remission
 - Relief of symptoms
 - Partially be effective
 - Ineffective
 - Side effects

PATIENT + DOCTOR INTERACTION

- Selection and trust of care-giver; confidence and inner consent influences the decision of the patient on which doctor to handle them.
- The doctor goes through a series of steps:
 - History
 - PE
 - Investigations
 - Formulation/interpretation/diagnosis
 - Treatment plans and process
 - Follow up
 - Record keeping
 - Outcomes

THE DOCTOR'S ROLE

- Should make the treatment process cost-effective, convenient, less invasive, comfortable and time-saving
- Should be reassuring.

HISTORY-TAKING

- Introductions
 - Detail your intention
 - Consents
- Get detail by creating rapport
- Sources reliability
- Memory/recall reliability
- Confirm/cross-check – truths, exaggerations ?Confidentiality/fear of exposure
- Privacy

PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

- Sensitivity to decency
- Taking in details and noting what does not appear normal
- Use eyes, hands, ears, nose – keenly
- Gentle, careful
- Keep a chaperone
- DO the uncomfortable, unpleasant and/or painful last.

INVESTIGATIONS

- They should be targeted and informative
- Cost-effective
- Non-invasive initially
- Sensitivity and specificity

DIAGNOSIS/FORMULATION

- Interpretation
- Theory background/knowledge
- Experience
- Practice
- Thought
- Straight forward or difficult
- May be a process – evolves and may change or extend or to be multiple.

COMMUNICATING FINDINGS

- Empathy
- Simplicity
- Understandable
- Sensitivity – level of comprehension
- Diagnosis
- Prognosis/outcomes
- Treatment/management options, Side Effects
- Holistic management/multidisciplinary
- Patients role in treatment
- Supports – family/counselor

TREATMENT OPTION

- Medical – Side effects of drugs
- Surgical – complication
- Nursing care
- Radiotherapy
- Etc.

FOLLOW-UP DETAILS/EXPECTED OUTCOME

- Monitoring
- Frequency

RECORDS - COMPREHENSIVE

- Legible, accuracy, truthful.
- Reminders
- Helpful to other caregivers
- Legal

TYPED BY DR. E. NAILAH

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