

“Behind Diagnoses: Patients” | A Peer Med Podcast Series

Behind every diagnosis, there is a patient, and in every patient is a human being with a beating heart. Medicine can only be effective when the human connection between physician and patient, the clinical relationship, is at the heart of patient-centred care.

With the advancement of modern medicine and the delivery of technology, the emotional and social tasks of providing care have taken a back seat. Patients look to the healthcare system for relief or recovery and with long wait times, and short appointments, it adds to their burden. Given the overcrowded facilities and a lack of resources, it is no surprise that physicians quickly take vital signs, prescribe medication and move on. The consequences of this cold and methodical conduct, however, may be efficient in the milieu of the healthcare systems present in the West, but they lack an effective, meaningful and consistent clinical relationship.

As an interface between an individual and their health needs, the physician’s role demands attention, understanding, compassion, and human connection with each and every patient. A person’s health is one of the most intimate aspects of their lives, and to involve a doctor is to place one’s trust in another human being to govern and guide their healthcare journeys alongside them.

Drawing on this intimate approach to care, the [“Behind Diagnoses: Patients”](#) podcast series, an initiative of the Peer Medical Foundation was created to invite patients with chronic illness, disabilities, and rare diseases to share their experiences navigating the healthcare system. Featured guests include disability advocate and artist Kaitlin Kerr, Indigenous, Latina and queer actress, Lilith Fury, women’s health advocate, Dafina Malovska and a UK-based award-winning artist and author, Sarah Lippett.

The stories on the platform provide value that may guide medical education and clinical practice emphasizing a holistic approach to patient-centred care. As healthcare professionals, we bound ourselves as allies to our communities; their sickness, suffering, pain, and death is theirs just as much as it is ours. Therefore, the deepest form of being an ally is that of a listener as people have a voice and words to share but all they need is an ear to listen.

I was truly humbled and honoured to be present for each patient’s eye-opening stories, emotional recounts, lived experiences, and suggestions for a more equitable healthcare system. This first-hand insight was an opportunity to learn about medical care from their perspective, what it means to seek care, to trust providers and to see medicine from their point of view. This perspective encourages me to take into account individual preferences, needs and values to guide care decisions through a collaborative space of discovery.

In personalizing treatment plans and care decisions, respect for every human being and their human rights is set forth allowing us to create bridges of understanding, trust and compassion. This approach allows us to empower patients and ensure their involvement. These changes further equity in care, address barriers to access and enable the launch of innovative treatments that truly make an impact. The clinical relationship would be able to be treated in an equitable fashion where both the physician and patient can work together to ensure the patients’ optimal health and shared goals based on the physician’s expertise and the patients’ familiarity with themselves.