

PRACTICE PEARLS

Compile favorite patient resources online

I created a free Google web site that I use to quickly access patient handouts and other relevant reference materials at the point of care. To build the site, I simply logged in to my existing Gmail account (easy to set up at <http://www.google.com> if you don't have one). Then in the menu at the top left, I clicked "Sites." A new screen opened, and I followed the steps to create my site.

Some of my favorite patient handout sites are familydoctor.org, Mayo Clinic (<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/DiseasesIndex/>) and Medline Plus (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>).

Nipa R. Shah, MD
Jacksonville, Fla.

Consider mental disorder diagnoses

In my practice, I often see patients who present with multiple physical complaints, such as chronic headaches, chest pain, abdominal pain and dizziness. Identifying the cause of these symptoms can require extensive, costly testing that may not yield a clear diagnosis. In such cases, I always keep in mind the possibility of depression or anxiety presenting as somatic complaints. Patients don't often volunteer other depression or anxiety symptoms because of the stigma of mental disorders, so it is crucial that we consider these issues on their behalf.

Hien Nguyen, MD
Fairfax, Va.

Help patients find what moves them

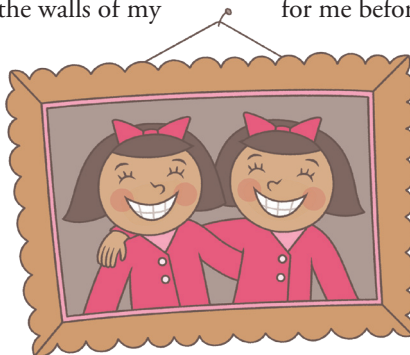
"Encouraging Patients to Change Unhealthy Behaviors With Motivational Interviewing" [May/June 2011, <http://www.aafp.org/>

[fpm/2011/0500/p21.html](http://www.aafp.org/fpm/2011/0500/p21.html)] is an excellent article with lots of good suggestions. I would like to offer another motivator: <http://zipmatch.org/about>, a web site designed specifically to help patients find what moves them. I have invested my own money in this venture because I believe that a major breakthrough to getting patients involved in regular exercise is creating the perception that physical activities are really social events and are much more appealing if done with a companion.

S. Clarke Smith, MD
Orange County, Calif.

Replace diplomas with more personal displays in exam rooms

About seven years ago, I decided to remove my "impressive" diplomas from the walls of my exam room and replace them with paintings, family photographs and inspirational quotes. When I made this simple change, I noticed that the conversations I had with my patients shifted from my accomplishments to the things that matter most to me and to my patients. Rather than ask



about my medical school and training, they now want to hear about my children and husband, and then they often share information and stories about their family. Some patients also talk about what the different quotes and paintings mean to them and how they help them feel more at ease.

Being surrounded by inspiration has helped me relax too and simply be myself, which is an important gift to give.

Amaryllis Sánchez Wohlever, MD
Oviedo, Fla.

Know who's in the exam room before you enter

Our practice uses an electronic health record system that produces a patient summary sheet, which my medical assistant prints for me before I enter the exam room.

She also hand writes the name and relationship of any persons accompanying the patient that day, for example, "John, husband."

It's always nice to know who is with the patient prior to seeing him or her, especially in cases where a spouse's age is very different from the patient's.

Jennifer Donohue, MD
Beaverton, Ore.

FPM

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