

## Patience and Patients: The Doctor's Dilemma

Michael Cheikin MD

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## Center for Optimal Health

*Health, Wellness and Education in One Center*  
832 Germantown Pike, Suite 3  
Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462  
610-239-9901 drc@c4oh.org

Why did the patient leave the doctor's office?  
Because he had a wait problem.

Why did the doctor close his office?  
Because he had no patients.

I always thought doctors' customers were called "patients" because they had to wait in a waiting room, often for long periods. They were expected to exhibit patience.

When patients are in the hospital, they are called "inpatients". When I was younger, I thought the word was "impatient", because they couldn't wait to get out of the hospital and go home.

Just a few decades ago, patients were encouraged to come to hospitals and stay--that's how hospitals and doctors made money. Now, with HMO's, hospitals and doctors make money by rushing people out! In some states, laws have been passed to insure that people can stay a proper amount of time. Does this new trend require that we now call the doctors and hospital administrators the "impatiens".

Fortunately, Webster's dictionary gets us out of this dilemma. The origin of the word patience has nothing to do with time or waiting; it is derived from the Latin "pati" for suffering, as is the word "passion", as in "the passion of the Christ".

I guess it's true that all patients suffer. Why else would they go to their doctors, hospitals, ER'? Pain and suffering are the major reasons for seeking health care. So the long waits are just an added benefit!?! And how about those insurance bills and copays? Wouldn't you do anything, even kill yourself, rather than deal with another "Explanation of Benefits"?

By examining the true nature of suffering and patience, we can lessen this burden. In fact, we all must revisit our beliefs and expectations about the health care system if it is going to ever

be repaired. It is in a spiralling crisis, and in some ways, our suffering and impatience is the cause. The failures of Modern Medicine are several: growing epidemics of chronic, preventable disease such as obesity and diabetes, medical care being the third-leading cause of death in the country (after heart disease and cancer), staggering health care costs, lack of access and quality time with health practitioners, etc. And what is the reason for all this? In my opinion, greed and lack of responsibility.

In the mid-1800's, the AMA was formed as a political-economic organization, in part to protect the allopathic doctors against the rising popularity of the herbalists and homeopaths. With the discovery of bacteria in the late 1800's, and then antibiotics in the early 1900's, allopathic medicine got the foothold it needed to essentially wipe out homeopathy and herbalism. In addition, documents were written that stated things like, "the doctor should never be questioned" and "medical matters are too complex for common people to understand". To this day, our attitudes, expectations and behaviors are shaped by these 100+ year-old notions.

As patients, we harbor a hope (and expectation) that no matter what we do, there will be a drug or surgery that will undo the damage we do to ourself. And that the treatment will be cheap, quick, and without negative consequence.

However, as we face aging and chronic disease, Modern Medicine doesn't offer such magic bullets. The best solution is to examine the true nature of our being patients--to examine our suffering. To go inside and find the sources of our unrealistic expectations, our denial, our materialistic lifestyle, our complacency and lack of responsibility.

At any age, from 12 to 112, a consumeristic, realistic, honest, responsible approach is amazingly effective for chronic conditions

including pain, asthma, fatigue, gastro-intestinal dysfunction, depression and anxiety. I have seen it work for hundreds of patients. The "treatment" involves education, nutrition, sleep, yoga (self-examination), exercise, relationship and a sense of purpose (spirituality). Since the days of Hippocrates these have been the best modalities. No wonder that with the crisis in health care we are turning back to these fundamental methods of healing.

consultation. 610-239-9901 or drc@c4oh.org.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: This general information should not be used to make decisions about medical care without the involvement of a knowledgeable practitioner.**

### **For More Information**

- O See Dr. Cheikin's related articles on: Detoxification, Elimination and Simplification and What We Really Need
- O Dr. Cheikin's website, [www.cheikin.com](http://www.cheikin.com), has helpful articles on related topics
- O Call to be placed on Dr. Cheikin's contact list for future lectures, classes, workshops and other services.
- O Starr, Paul: Social Transformation of American Medicine. NY: Basic Books, 1984. ISBN 0465-079-350. (won the 1983 Pulitzer Prize)
- O [www.pbs.org/newshour/health/patientsrights/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/patientsrights/)
- O [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)
- O [www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/)

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Michael Cheikin MD is a holistic physician, Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation ("Physiatry"), Pain Management, Spinal Cord Medicine and Electrodiagnostic Medicine. He has provided leadership to several local medical institutions. Dr. Cheikin utilizes conventional and "alternative" modalities, including special lab tests, medical nutrition, medical yoga and medical acupuncture to enhance the healing of obscure, chronic and severe problems. He accepts most insurances for