



THE EMPOWERED PATIENT

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If you were dreaming up your idea of the very best medical care scenario, what would you want it to include? I expect you'd want care that made your symptoms go away. And you'd want to be "well." But what else? Would you like to feel respected by your medical practitioner? Would you like that person to see you on time? Actively listen to your concerns, and discuss them with you in some depth? Treat you promptly and assess your progress on-goingly? Would you want your health care practitioner to send you home with suggestions about how YOU can do something to TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOUR SELF?

If you also chose the last item, then you have a good potential to become an empowered patient. But the next question you must ask yourself is: would you DO your homework? Change your diet? Take your pills? Practice your exercises? Learn a new skill? Follow-up on a referral? Stay steady on a recommended treatment course?

If you've said "yes" to these questions, then you *are* an empowered patient!

Your most important task as an empowered patient is to realistically assess your own condition and level of willingness to change. If you are eager to 'get well', take the steps of an empowered patient:

- Search out and select health care practitioners who listen, who offer effective care, and who teach you how to improve your own health.
- Do your homework.
- Report back! Stay in touch with your practitioner(s), let the practitioner(s) know what is, or is not, working; ask for more guidance including referrals elsewhere.
- Stick with a recommended program if it is helping, and openly discuss problems and seek alternative solutions, if it isn't.
- Don't let insurance companies or health care practitioners dictate to you—make your own informed decisions.

As an acupuncturist I love empowered patients. I nearly always assign 'homework' as part of my therapeutic method. I offer tips on self-care chosen to help *that* person enhance their wellness. I am happiest when my patients feel better, and I see improved health as a cooperative venture—I do my part; you do yours!