

## Medical Expert Pressure

### Clients and colleagues

- Worry they aren't a competent clinician - don't know all the statistics and evidence off hand for every patient
- Worry they haven't gotten a good answer for their patient's symptom - spend excessive time ruminating about it, sending many consults

We have so much pressure to know all the things. And to know the Right Answer to things. End up cutting us off from our knowledge and ignoring/devaluing what we do know

When our brains are in fear mode, they are looking for the threat

- Our brains are often trained to look for the mistake, for the gap in knowledge – because in the past, that one fact that you didn't know mattered more than the hundreds of other facts that you DID know (you got 99%? What happened to the other 1%?)
- We think that this is what makes us high-achieving and driven, but it's actually keeping us miserable. Especially in healthcare when the body of knowledge is impossibly large, no one is actually grading you, and it's more important to foster trust in what you DO know
- If you chronically discount your knowledge, your brain will think it's not important to keep that knowledge, and certainly not important to reward yourself for the knowledge you do have.
- So you go through your day feeling constantly inadequate, stupid, incompetent, not-enough.
- You stop listening to your patients as attentively, because as soon as they start talking your brain is frantically hunting for a good solution in order to feel ok.
- You sometimes even get resentful and angry at patients who present with complex and confusing symptoms that aren't easy to figure out - because your brain sees those ambiguous symptoms as a threat to your survival need to Be Right and Know The Right Answer.
- You don't provide your best care if you're constantly feeling under threat. And you probably won't stay in medicine for the long haul if you think the only way to be satisfied is to know all the things and have answers for all the things.

Fact check:

Medicine is a heterogeneous discipline. There is very rarely a RIGHT ANSWER.

- This is actually oppressive and supremacist thinking that's baked into our culture.
  - We were trained in a system that was created out of supremacist, oppressive and paternalistic ways of thinking. Things are changing, but this hasn't fully changed yet.
  - Here is how it's oppressive: A society that requires a certain elite set of people to hold all the knowledge and then dole it out to the rest of the uneducated masses - there's a good idea in there: I'll learn about medicine, and then other people can spend their time learning and sharing expertise in other things instead. BUT

when the knowledge keepers start to identify too strongly with their role, so that they are threatened and insulted if a non-expert shares a contradictory opinion, we know it's become more about keeping the societal power and value that the expertise brings, than actually sharing the knowledge.

- Ex. being threatened when someone googles their symptoms - first of all - this is our reality. So adjusting to the reality is really helpful mentally and emotionally, so you're not spending your day getting constantly surprised and upset that humans are doing exactly what humans do in this modern age. Second of all, WHY are we threatened by this? Genuinely ask yourself why – not so you can judge yourself, but so you can get curious about what stories lie underneath. For me, there were a few different stories, but one of them definitely was “They don't respect me as an expert if they're googling for me”. Blech - no thank you. Do I know everything about everything? NO! Have there been times where a patient brought me knowledge I didn't have and I learned from them? YES! Being threatened in that situation - when there is PLENTY of other work to go around - is not a story that was serving me.
- We DO have a ton of knowledge and experience!
- We often have our experience devalued but it's actually the most rich and irreplaceable source of knowledge we have. Studies and facts can and will change. Your experience will always be there to guide you.

### New healthy human story

My patients are each the experts of their lives, their story, their bodies. Period! I can release the supremacist paternalistic thinking that trained me to think I'm supposed to know better than then what they need

So when patients bring in their googled hypothesis - I can partner with them and compare notes. I'm still the person with the license and the job of deciding what tests get ordered, what medicine gets prescribed - but I don't have the burden of having to share all the knowledge with all the patients. (I plan to do a whole episode of my approach to Dr Google patient scenarios because there's more to unpack here)

I am an enthusiast not an expert. I am a super fan of humans and their bodies. I am a student and a teacher and a hype person for how the body works and I am so grateful to share what I've learned with my patients and get curious about how it applies to them and their bodies. I am a detective, I am a scientist. I am NOT an expert. Unless expert = experience, then I'm ok with that one!