

Repeated Doctor Shopping in Functional Abdominal Pain Patient and Its Impact: A Case Report

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ABSTRACT

Doctor-shopping involves visiting multiple doctors with the same health problem and is often observed in outpatient clinics.^[1] Patients visit more doctors when they have a chronic disease or a drug addiction and their health problem remains unresolved despite receiving treatment.^[2] The provider-patient relationship is essential to treatment of patient. If patient is visiting multiple doctors at same time without any previous records and even not disclosing previous checkups leads to repeated prescription of medication, increased drug dose consumption and increased healthcare cost as well. Here we report a case of 54 year female with chronic functional abdominal pain with once to twice weekly checkups at different hospital and with different specialist consultations.

Keywords: doctor shopping, healthcare cost, drug abuse

CASE REPORT

A 54 year old female reported to OPD at Civil Hospital, Bhawarna with chief complaint of abdominal pain on and off for past 2 months. On history taking, it was found that pain was in lower abdomen, insidious in onset, moderate in intensity, non-radiating, not associated with discharge per vaginum, deranged bladder or bowel habits and there were no aggravating or relieving factors. Patient was receiving on and off painkillers, antibiotics, muscle relaxants, gabapentin for the same for past 2 years. her previous records revealed

multiple hospital visits, all investigations namely; complete hemogram, peripheral blood smear, liver function test, renal function test and urine microscopy, ultrasound whole abdomen, cect abdomen and pelvis were normal. Patient had even undergone endoscopy for same and no abnormality was detected.

On per abdominal examination, abdomen was soft with no tenderness, no organomegaly and no mass felt. Per speculum and per vaginal examination were normal. Patient was diagnosed with functional abdominal pain. Patient and her attendant were counselled about her diagnosis and advised follow ups with psychiatrist.

DISCUSSION

Changing doctors for the same illness episode without a referral and a link to a history of previous treatment reduces healthcare providers' ability to ensure effective and efficient treatment.^[3-5] Long-term success is influenced by a strong patient-provider relationship, so one of the core responsibilities of acute care providers is arranging for close, high-quality outpatient follow-up.^[6] Changing doctors reduces continuity of care which can translate into worse disease management and increased waiting times as well as increased cost of treatment for both the patients and payers.^[7] Another reason for analyzing the phenomenon of doctor shopping is drug abuse. According to police

and regulatory agency perceptions, about 40% of prescription drug diversions were sourced from doctor-shopping; reduce doctor-shopping are a proper diagnosis, high patient satisfaction and a good patient–doctor relationship.^[8] in our case report, we found cause of doctor shopping as lack of trust on treating doctor, association with somatic disorder, lack of patient satisfaction and phobia to be labeled as psychiatric patient.

Knowing the characteristics of doctor-shoppers may help identify such patients and reduce the associated waste of medical resources.^[1]

CONCLUSION

In our conclusion, trust between doctor and patient plays important role in treatment. Doctor shopping is not an answer to disease cure rather it is increasing healthcare cost and treatment interval.

Conflict of Interest: None

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