Interview with a Doctor

October 20, 2011 By Aundaray Guess

I think one of the most important parts of your health care is choosing a doctor that you feel comfortable with as this person will be someone you'll be sharing your most private information. Yet some once they're HIV diagnosed may go to a health provider and have such a bad experience that they may not continue and lose out on getting a handle on their health.

You have to learn self-advocacy skills because once you're behind those closed doors you're on your own. I had to learn that it takes awhile to learn such skills. My own memories recall the first doctor I had. I was fortunate as on the first day he gave me a tool that I use to this day. He basically told me to question his advice and if something doesn't feel right, to ask questions and not just accept his prescribing of meds.

Of course I couldn't go crazy and just be resistance to everything he told me, but he gave me that room to ask questions when I was unsure about something, whether it was necessary to take certain pills, what did my blood work mean and was I placing myself at risk if I did certain acts in my relationships.

When it was time to part ways because of his job change I had those tools he gave me, yet ran into doctor who didn't have the same mindset of being questioned. There are some doctors who get lost in the numbers that follow their name and feel they know it all. I'll never forget after being in my 20th year of having this virus, my new doctor who couldn't have been that much older than me, trying to give me a sex education lesson on how to live with HIV. I know I shocked him when I told him I'd been living with this disease longer than he has been practicing it. It wasn't said out of cockiness but it was clear he didn't even read my file to learn who I was.

He learned that day.
So in the most simple ways to find a good doctor you should do the following:

1. **Interview the doctor**. Ask about their background and experience. Being African-American and recognizing there are different things I may have to deal with such as high blood pressure and diabetes, asking them what was their knowledge of African-American health issues. I'm literally placing my life in your hands and I want to know what you know and most importantly your experience.

2. **Question medical diagnosis**- This is where it can become tricky because after all they're the ones with the doctorate degree, but if you're being prescribed something that you're unfamiliar with ask what will do this do to me once I swallow it. Find out the side effects and if it's a medication that is difficult to take as you may not have a place to keep it in the fridge or eat meals at the same time of the day, you may want to see if there's other choices.

3. **Google away**- This also has some faults as some people can be bias when posting a review on the

internet as well as be vindictive because the anonymity the internet provides but more people are writing their opinions about their doctor visits and placing it on the web. After a thorough search for a new provider it helped me find a doctor that sounded like we would be a good match. There were some that looked promising but after reading several different reviews on how unprofessional they were or how they were always late for appointments, it made my choices easier and saved me from wasting my time going to an office visit where the negative reviews were validated.

4. **Being able to say it's not going to work**- As stated before, your relationship with your doctor is just like any other relationship. Sometimes on that first visit you hit it off as you can feel their listening to you and hearing your concerns. Other times you catch them watching the clock as you're trying to explain to them about the pain in your leg. Often times the non-verbal speak louder than the verbal. But before you dismiss them have a talk with them about your concern and I emphasize the word, talk, and not giving attitude. And if you still feel it's not a fit, let them know and find another provider

Finding a good health provider is so important especially in this age when doctors are under pressure to see as many patients in a day based on the clinic they work in.Yes doctors have quotas also, so sometimes it feels like you're in a turnstile as you just sat down and already you're out the door.

If you have good insurance often private doctors are sometimes more desirable than clinics, but there are many clinics that give excellent one-on-one service that is unmatched by a private doctor. It's all about doing your research and knowing what works for you. Knowing your comforts, such as do you prefer a female over male, someone gay over straight and someone the same ethnicity as you. But whatever your preference is don't just miss your medical appointments because of a bad experience.

Take your care in your hand and learn the skill of speaking your mind!

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