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## Patients want to know

What do patients want from their primary care practitioners? Two French surveys conducted in 2009 and published in 2011 provide some interesting insights (1).

**Take time to explain.** A multidisciplinary team doing research on primary care looked at users' principal concerns when consulting general practitioners. They studied a varied sample of 65 persons, most of whom considered themselves healthy (1).

According to this survey, the most important aspects of care centre upon the physician-patient relationship: obtaining information on health problems and treatments; the physician's knowledge of the patient's medical history; listening; giving clear explanations (1). For the authors of the study, these findings were consistent with those of another study of 3540 patients in various European countries: patients want to play a more active role, to share in medical decisions, to understand the state of their health, and to gain more autonomy (1).

**Informing patients to improve their skills.** According to the French survey, patients seemed to expect a great deal from their doctors in terms of information and the acquisition of skills. However, when offering

patient education to someone who has a chronic illness, physicians tend to offer advice and information aimed mainly at improving compliance with treatment, rather than providing the patient with "*skills to promote self-determination and quality of life*" (2).

Studies conducted in France and other countries show that people with chronic illnesses want "*greater recognition of their own knowledge of their disease and its self-management (...); and help with acquiring skills to enhance their personal development (...). Hence the doctor must constantly find a compromise between the patient's desire to "live well" in the present and the medical objective of preventing complications of the illness*" (2).

**Less advice, more explanations!** Patients seem to be looking for more explanations... and less advice. Quite a challenge for practitioners. And surely an observation that is not limited to general practitioners alone.

**Prescrire**

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1- Krucien N et al. "Les transformations de l'offre de soins correspondent-elles aux préoccupations des usagers de médecine générale?" Irdes Question d'économie de la santé 2011 (163): 6 pages.

2- Fournier C et al. "Prévention, éducation pour la santé et éducation thérapeutique en médecine générale". In: Gauthier A et al. "Baromètre santé médecins généralistes 2009" Inpes 2011. inpes.sante.fr accessed 2 September 2011: 258 pages.