



# Halifax Chiropractic Clinic

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## SENIORS ADVOCATE

### COMMUNICATION IS THE KEY

by Dr. Brian S. Seaman, DC, FCCSS(C), FICC

We're not mind readers!

Yes - - that's right - - Believe it or not your health care professional cannot read your mind.

Good communication is a key factor in all walks of life - - at home, at work, at play and at your doctor's office. It is important to have a clear idea of what you are going to say to your health care professional and what your expectations of your office visit will be. Here's a few hints:

Think ahead - - If necessary make a list but be realistic. You cannot expect 5 or 6 health issues to be dealt with in a thorough manner, in just one appointment. Maybe they are related but more likely they are not.

- **Prioritize** – Pick the one or two things that are the most pressing or important issues at the time. I hear of many offices which have established a policy of “one problem – one appointment”. I don't necessarily agree with this, but I can appreciate the intent behind this decision. In this way your health care professional can focus on your primary complaint or concern by asking questions and, if necessary, performing the appropriate examination procedures. This also allows for time to consider what, if any diagnostic tests (i.e. x-rays, blood work, etc.) are necessary, or if you should be referred for a specialty consultation.

Yes it may be inconvenient to book that second appointment but wouldn't you prefer that your health care professional give the utmost attention to each of your health issues rather than trying to rush through the first couple of concerns that you have, so that he/she can spend a brief period of time on the third one?

### CALLING AHEAD

If you have a significant health problem or issue to discuss with your health care professional, it would be a good idea to call the office ahead and let the staff know. If the health issue is of a personal or confidential nature, indicate this to the staff if you are asked, and explain that you prefer to discuss it in detail with your health care professional.

Another example, is that a patient will book a regular appointment and not provide the staff with any indication as to the problem. When the doctor. walks in and asks how they are doing, they immediately respond “*I was in a car accident*”.

If the Dr. has not checked his/her schedule he/she may ask “*Did you mention this to the staff when you booked the appointment?*”.

The responses will vary but the reality of the situation is that most health care professionals will not have sufficient time to document the necessary information and perform the appropriate examination for a car accident case, unless they opt to run behind the rest of the day (thus inconveniencing the other patients), rescheduling you (an inconvenience to you), or working through his/her break or lunch hour (which many do so anyway in order to accommodate their patients as best as possible).

So how does this relate to being “mind readers”? Well, it really relates to good communication skills by both you and your health care professional. Unless you explain what your concerns are, it is much more difficult for your health care professional to figure out what the problem is.

On the other hand, when I was interning, my professor once told me that my patients would tell me the diagnosis 80% of the time. While this my initially seemed a bit unusual, what he was referring to is that if the health care professional asks the right questions and the patient's answers are as concise as possible, then he should be able to have a pretty good



idea as to the cause of the patients problem most of the time. In other words - - good communication. Your examination and any diagnostic testing would confirm this.

### **REMEMBER**

- Pick one or two primary concerns.
- Phone ahead if a major health issue exists.
- Talk to your health care professional - - Get to know them. It is part of establishing the doctor – patient relationship.
- Listen to your health care professionals questions, and answer as concisely as possible.

### **ONE LAST THING .....**

Have you ever forgotten that problem with your knee or shoulder and decided to mention it to your health care professional at the end of the appointment - - just as they have their hand on the doorknob or halfway out the door?

This actually happens a lot. Sometimes your health care professional can spend a few extra minutes talking about that extra concern. Sometimes not. If not, then follow their advice and make another appointment so that the problem can be dealt with properly and fairly.

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Halifax Chiropractic Clinic  
6112 Willow Street  
Halifax, NS B3K 1M2  
Ph: 1 902 423-9223  
Fax: 1 902 423-9666