

A New Type of Doctor Patient Relationship

In the ever-changing landscape of the 21st century, even our most foundational institutions are being adapted and updated, sometimes leaving them unrecognizable from previous generations. Medicine is not exempt from these forces of change. As new doctors enter the profession, they are often choosing to work fewer hours, taking salaried positions at large hospital corporations rather than open their own practice. This leads to a less stressful lifestyle, more hours at home with the family, and less time seeing patients. In short, “medicine has gone from being an individual to a team sport”.

This obviously has large implications for the future of the doctor-patient relationship, and the delivery of medical care in general. A patient’s relationship with their doctor, who is now working fewer hours, will inevitably become less personal; you may end up seeing several different doctors, each with their own specialty, leading to different relationships than if you saw a single doctor. Studies have shown, however, that this multi-doctor approach is more proficient, so perhaps trading a good relationship for more expertise can be a good deal.

If the doctor-patient relationship cannot be the comforter it has been in the past, something needs to step in and fill that void. This may affect nurse protocol, where they take special care to get to know the patient better, or prompt upgrades in the patient environment, like technology installations where patients can do research to prepare for a visit from the doctor, or simply relax and distract themselves from their current situation. Whatever the solution to this opening is, the medical landscape will surely continue to evolve, taking doctors and patients and the rest of us along with it.