



Unspeakable Answers to Patients' Questions

Don't you just feel that sometimes you can be utterly frank with your patient? Especially the ones that irritate you all the way to the moon. Of course, in this age of being 'customer'-centred, we can't afford to offend our (diminishing number of) patients. So we say the nice things, the politically-correct stuff. But just for once, don't you wish you could respond to your patient's questions (Q) with the following 'unspeakable answers' (UA)?

Q: Doctor, can I have some antibiotics? My phlegm is yellow.

UA: Sure. Contribute to the MRSA and VRE cause, idiot. You have a running nose and your yellow phlegm is always there because you smoke and you have chronic bronchitis already.

Q: Doctor, the Internet tells me that I may have the following 36 conditions, given what I feel. What do you think?

UA: This is actually an online drug website, you *kiasu* hypochondriac. Why don't I investigate you for all 36 conditions and charge you for it?

Q: Doctor, the cough mixture you gave me yesterday didn't work for my child.

UA: I don't have a cough mixture that can guarantee cure in one day.

Q: (Same patient, 3 months later.) Doctor, the cough mixture you gave me the last time worked for my kid. What was it?

UA: It's the same as the one I gave you 3 months ago but in a different colour. Anyway, I'm just lucky that when you saw me the last time, you had already doctor-hopped twice and the cough had run its course after one week. Sucker.

Q: Doctor, sorry to come so late. Sorry to hold you and your staff back.

UA: Sigh. We're sorry too. How come every time you come in 5 minutes before closing? You like irritating me and my staff, izzit?

Q: Doctor, someone told me this drug XXX is very good for my diabetes.

UA: Look mister, I am not exactly minting money looking after you. I earn like 5 bucks from your managed health care scheme. And you want me to provide something that costs \$3.45 a pill when your HbA1C is 6.7? And if I prescribe this, some wise guy from your managed health care scheme will be on my back in no time.

- Q: Doctor, last time when I went to government hospital X as a private patient, this hypertension drug only costs \$1.50 a pill but you charge me \$1.80?
- UA: That's because my consultation is \$10 and the hospital is charging you \$35 for even a repeat consultation. I also have to eat you know.
- Q: Doctor, I am the eldest son. I should have been briefed and consulted before you went ahead to perform the procedure.
- UA: Look dude, you haven't seen your mother in ages and you don't even stay with her. I have already briefed your other 3 sisters and 2 brothers and they all agreed. Your mum also gave consent in the presence of your eldest sister, whom she normally stays with. What do I need to do? Call a vote of the whole clan like a condominium en-bloc exercise? Bugger off!
- Q: Doctor, is this operation risky for my mother?
- UA: I am sympathetic to your current plight but really, she's 91 and anything is risky at 91, including crossing the road.
- Q: Doctor, I heard that drinking YYY juice can lower my blood pressure.
- UA: Some things probably can lower your pressure for 30 minutes, but what are you going to do for the other 23 hours and 30 minutes in the day? Have an IV YYY juice drip?
- Q: Doctor, I don't know what drug I am allergic to. But I know it's a yellow pill for pain. Do you know what it is?
- UA: What if they now make it in pink or white? Anyway, serves you right, now you only get paracetamol for pain. At least I don't think they make yellow paracetamol.....yet.
- Q: Doctor, lately my performance at night not so good. My wife is not happy (blushes). Can I have the blue pill.....?
- UA: Hello, don't bluff me OK? You think I born yesterday? You dirty old man want to go and have fun say so. I don't think you wife is worried about your performance. Your wife already told me you are going to China next week without her. Anyway, at \$25 a pop, I make good money out of you.
- Q: Doctor, will I benefit from IPL laser? Shall I go and see Dr GGG in town for treatment? You see this pigmentation here? Very ugly hor?
- UA: What a vain pot! Why would a 28-year-old benefit from IPL? What pigmentation? But since you want to make my colleague richer, I will say: "Up to you, why not? If you think it'll help you, then by all means...."
- Q: Doctor, can I buy another 2 bottles of cough mixture from you for standby?
- UA: I don't sell cough mixtures. And I don't want to get into any trouble with SMC. Can't you just bring your kid for a quick consultation?
- Q: (Before admission for elective surgery.) Doctor, do you mind if I downgrade to B2 for the admission and will you still operate on me?
- UA: Sigh. I will still operate on you. Sheesh, this is the third downgrading this week. My clinical allowance will be hit hard. Maybe it's time to go private if more and more people downgrade at admission.....
- Q: (Same patient, at discharge after elective surgery.) Doctor, thanks for performing the surgery and for referring me to be seen by the cardiologist before the surgery. I think I would like to have my high blood pressure and cholesterol followed up here instead of the subsidised clinic.
- UA: Oh-oh. Now more GPs will think we are stealing patients from them when we really don't have a choice! Your GP will never refer to me again!
- Q: Wow, doctor, how come you actually know from the computer that I went to Hospital X A&E last month? Nowadays computer very advanced eh?
- UA: You are supposed to ALREADY know such IT systems exist and therefore have given implied consent to me assessing your old records. Obviously you don't know this IT system exists and you therefore could not have given any implied consent. In other words, your privacy rights have just been thrown out of the window. But of course you don't know any of that.....
- Q: Doctor, I read in the newspapers that now that you don't have any guidelines for fees, will you charge less or more?
- UA: What do you think? Did petroleum prices and taxi fares drop after de-regulation? You tell me..... ■