



# Trust Is a 2-Way Street: Fostering Trust in Patient- Provider Relationships

The emerging evidence related to patient and family engagement highlights a range of **significant benefits related to communication and trust**. While most research focuses on whether strategies enhance patient trust in their clinicians, providers also need to trust patients.



## Doctors often miss the mark on trusting patients' experience and expertise.

Patients not trusting their providers is often cited as a challenge, yet evidence shows doctors don't always trust their patients.

- **Believing patients' pain:** Evidence is clear that providers frequently undertreat pain for women and people of color. For example, a metaanalysis of 20 years of studies found that **Black Americans are 22% less likely** than white patients **to receive any pain medication**.<sup>1</sup>
- **Taking people's health concerns seriously:** Women are **7x more likely** than men to be misdiagnosed and **discharged** in the middle of having a **heart attack**.<sup>2</sup>
- **Listening to patients:** Clinicians averaged **11 seconds** before **interrupting** patients' opening comments.<sup>3</sup>



### Effective engagement can bolster patient trust.

- **Clinician question prompts:** A question prompt list helped adolescents ask more questions on managing their asthma and were nearly 5 points more satisfied with their visit.<sup>4</sup> Compared to the control group, youth in the intervention were **8x more likely to ask questions about asthma triggers**.
- **Patient communication preferences:** Patients with serious illness who filled out a form about their communication preferences were **more than 2x as likely to discuss and receive care in line with their goals**.<sup>5</sup>
- **Decision aids:** Parents of children with head trauma who used a decision aid to select treatment reported **increased levels of trust** in their doctors.<sup>6</sup>



### Trusting patients helps clinicians do their jobs better.<sup>7</sup>

- **Better diagnosis:** Patient narratives have **demonstrated diagnostic value**.
- **Better patient relationships:** Patients need to feel that sharing their vulnerabilities will make a difference in their health and their care — which leads to **mutual trust-building**.
- **Cultivating clinician joy in practice:** Strengthened patient-provider relationships facilitates a sense of connection and meaning that may help to **reduce clinician burnout**.

1 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22239747/>

2 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJM200008243430809>

3 <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/07/180719112209.htm>

4 <https://www.pcori.org/research-results/2014/using-question-prompt-lists-help-youth-asthma-get-more-involved-clinic-visits>

5 <https://www.pcori.org/research-results/2013/improving-communication-preparing-patients-and-doctors-conversation-about-care>

6 <https://www.pcori.org/research-results/2013/using-decision-aid-emergency-room-help-parents-children-head-trauma-understand>

7 [https://cfrps.unistra.fr/fileadmin/uploads/websites/cfrps/Pauses\\_pedagogiques/2019\\_mai/article.pdf](https://cfrps.unistra.fr/fileadmin/uploads/websites/cfrps/Pauses_pedagogiques/2019_mai/article.pdf)

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