

[IMAGE]

## Important Enough to Talk About

Ask 10 happily married couples why their relationships work. No doubt you'll hear a common phrase offered as the key ingredient: communication. Communication is vital to all human relationships, whether between husband and wife, employer and employee, or doctor and patient.

The relationship between the physician and the patient is especially important because life-and-death issues may be involved. Communication problems that contribute to a delay in diagnosis and treatment can prove fatal.

Race, ethnicity and gender have been cited as important barriers affecting patient-physician communication. A study that appeared in the August 11, 1999 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* investigated these variables in terms of patients' expectations and sense of participation in the clinical experience. Results revealed some disturbing differences:

- € Patients who were the same race as their physician rated their visits as more participatory than other patients;
- € African-American patients rated visits as far less participatory than Caucasian patients; and
- € Patients of female physicians rated visits as more participatory than patients of male physicians.

The authors suggest that these findings emphasize the need for improved cross-cultural communication between primary care physicians and patients. Don't let your doctor examine you for a minute or two and then send you on your way with another prescription. And if you're looking for a thorough examination and consultation with a health care professional who will take the time to answer all your questions, make an appointment with a doctor of chiropractic.

### *Reference:*

Cooper-Patrick L, Gallo JJ, Gonzales JJ, et al. Race, gender and partnership in the patient-physician relationship. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, August 11, 1999: Vol. 282, No. 6, pp583-89. .

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