



Four Questions to Ask

When facing a medical event, most Canadians will defer to the expertise of their physicians and healthcare practitioners. After all, that's why we consult them instead of the internet. However, doctors are like the rest of us and are habitual in nature. If a patient presents with an issue, doctors often prescribe a course of treatment or testing that they may have used in the past regardless of each unique situation. This means unnecessary tests and procedures.

Did you know that as much as 30% of healthcare in Canada is unnecessary?

Oftentimes we don't think about the costs because our universal healthcare system pays for many of the doctors' fees and tests. Although when we are asked to pay out of pocket, costs can lead to financial hardship. We are seeing cuts to public health plans across the country. Therefore, if we can control the costs within the public health care system, perhaps we can stem the transfer of costs to the private consumer.

What is perhaps more concerning than wasted cost is the impact to our health. Unnecessary testing and procedures can actually be harmful to your health. Unnecessary tests and treatments do not add value to care. In fact, they take away from care by potentially exposing patients to harm (ex. exposure to radiation), leading to more testing to investigate false positives and contributing to stress for patients. While we rely on doctors for their expert advice, patients too have a responsibility for their own healthcare.

Healthcare needs to be a collaborative effort between doctors, healthcare practitioners and patients. The next time you need medical attention, start a conversation with your doctor by asking these four questions:

- 1 • Do I really need this test, treatment, or procedure?
- 2 • What are the downsides?
- 3 • Are there simpler, safer options?
- 4 • What happens if I do nothing?

Sources:

<http://www.choosingwiselycanada.org/>