

Improving Diagnosis in Healthcare

Improving Diagnosis in Healthcare (2015). National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Institute of Medicine; Board on Health Care Services; Committee on Diagnostic Error in Health Care; Erin P. Balogh, Bryan T. Miller, and John R. Ball, Editors

<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/21794/improving-diagnosis-in-health-care?fbclid=IwAR2ht8JZQGHLWEIqlBjwqPqx6qtmgc9JYpI8mSRUJaLZFdzljAubk2MkOAI>

The National Academy of Sciences describes the process of diagnosis and the role of consultation in a paper on *Improving Diagnosis in Healthcare* (2015),

Diagnosis

From *Improving Diagnosis*: “The working diagnosis may be either a list of potential diagnoses (a differential diagnosis) or a single potential diagnosis. Typically, clinicians will consider more than one diagnostic hypothesis or possibility as an explanation of the patient’s symptoms and will refine this list as further information is obtained in the diagnostic process.” (National Academy of Sciences, 2015)

From *Improving Diagnosis*: “As the diagnostic process proceeds, a fairly broad list of potential diagnoses may be narrowed into fewer potential options, a process referred to as diagnostic modification and refinement (Kassirer et al., 2010). As the list becomes narrowed to one or two possibilities, diagnostic refinement of the working diagnosis becomes diagnostic verification, in which the lead diagnosis is checked for its adequacy in explaining the signs and symptoms, its coherency with the patient’s context (physiology, risk factors), and whether a single diagnosis is appropriate.” (National Academy of Sciences, 2015)

From *Improving Diagnosis*: “Throughout the diagnostic process, there is an ongoing assessment of whether sufficient information has been collected. If the diagnostic team members are not satisfied that the necessary information has been collected to explain the patient’s health problem, or that the information available is not consistent with a diagnosis, then the process of information gathering, information integration and interpretation, and developing a working diagnosis continues.” (National Academy of Sciences, 2015)

From *Improving Diagnosis*: “In addition, the provision of treatment can also inform and refine a working diagnosis, which is indicated by the feedback loop from treatment into the information-gathering step of the diagnostic process. This also illustrates the need for clinicians to diagnose health problems that may arise during treatment.” (National Academy of Sciences, 2015)

Consultation

From Improving Diagnosis in Health Care: “Clinicians may refer to or consult with other clinicians (formally or informally) to seek additional expertise about a patient’s health problem. The consult may help to confirm or reject the working diagnosis or may provide information on potential treatment options. If a patient’s health problem is outside a clinician’s area of expertise, he or she can refer the patient to a clinician who holds more suitable expertise. Clinicians can also recommend that the patient seek a second opinion from another clinician to verify their impressions of an uncertain diagnosis or if they believe that this would be helpful to the patient.”