

## Gifted adults at the doctor



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&  
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## An early start?



## Dr Noks Nauta



- MD since 1975, specializing in occupational health
  - Psychologist since 1999
  - Member of Mensa NL since 2000
  - Patient (or impatient?): conflicts with doctors, did not feel understood
  - Professional work with gifted adults since 2000: many stories and experiences from gifted adults at the doctor
- Found no research on the topic 'gifted at the doctor'
- Mensa's Medics SIG, contact with Rebecca

## Rebecca Ridolfo



Member of Mensa UK  
Has suffered from a lot of ill health  
Has a lot of interest in medical matters, most recently by becoming involved with this survey

## Program overview



- Your experiences
- Statements for plenary discussion
- Stories from gifted adults
- Results of the international survey (N = 31)
- Deliberation about communication
- Advice for gifted patients and for doctors

## Your experience?



- Your experience as a gifted patient/ client in (mental) healthcare:
  - Illness/ complaint in relation to giftedness?
  - Your communication with professionals?



## What do you think?

### Plenary discussion on statements

- Gifted adults
  - can diagnose their own illnesses?
  - know what kind of help they need?
  - often have a good relationship with their doctor?
  - are seldom ill?
  - are difficult patients?
  - find it hard to find their role as a patient?
  - want a gifted doctor?
  - .....?

## Plenary

### Are there any medical professionals here?

- What is your experience with gifted patients?
  - ...
  - ...



## Gifted patients

### First observations

- Do not get enough information from doctor
- Information from doctor not exact enough
- Do not feel heard or recognized
- Doctor does not ask relevant questions
- Treated as persons with average intelligence
- Want more shared decision making

## Observations by doctors of gifted patients

- Arrogant, know-it-all
- Not asking for help, but asking for examination, medication etc
- Not looking ill or in need of help
- Not giving the doctor the role of a doctor...
- Give too much information



## International survey

- Open questions
  - Experiences in communication with medical doctors
  - How does your giftedness affect these experiences?
  - Advice to gifted adults?
  - Advice to medical doctors?
- Via LinkedIn groups of gifted people and Mensa SIG newsletters
- Started September 2013

## Respondents

- N = 31
- male 15, female 16
- Ages 28-88
- Location:
  - UK 11
  - USA 8
  - Europe 12

## Results 1: Experiences

- Vary from very good to very bad
- Positive experiences
  - Gifted doctor
  - Friendly and sympathetic
  - Good listener
  - We search for solutions together
- Negative experiences
  - Uncomfortable when I ask questions
  - Not providing details
  - They tend to guess and guess wrong
  - Misdiagnoses
  - Defensive
  - Doctor knows best

## Results 2: the Giftedness factor

- Topics
  - Asking questions (more often, pertinent, unusual)
  - Doing own research
  - Intelligence helps to get better treatment
  - Intelligence may lead to wrong opinion
  - Understanding more
  - Not intimidated
  - Discernment:
    - Intuitive?
    - Feelings in body?
    - Rational?
  - Anxiety (based on hypersensitivity?)

## Rebecca Ridolfo

The 2 key topics are **questions** and **listening**. On conducting this survey, I have realised that I have this in common with at least 31 other gifted adults.

The **reaction to questions** -- ranging from delighted to offended -- is a **key indicator of professionalism**. **Defensiveness** about being questioned is a **red flag**.

The most important skill a doctor can have is the ability to **listen** well – without that, the diagnosis is likely to be wrong and likewise the treatment.

## Stories from gifted adults

- I was 12 when I told my mother and the optalmologist that I had astigmatism (the doctor had not noticed).
- My lung function was 100%, but the doctor did not know that normally it was 130%.
- I suggested to the doctor a medication for my wife he had not thought of, but he found it a very good idea.
- When I mentioned my own scientific background, the doctor seemed affronted.
- I have the idea that my way of telling my symptoms is very different from how other people tell them.



### Deliberation on communication of gifted patients (1)

- Arrogance and know-it-all behavior could be based on:
  - Sense of quality of care, discernment
  - Vulnerability
  - Need for recognition
  - Anxiety
  - Stemming from the doctor's own insecurities &/or need to feel 'in charge'
  - .....?

### Deliberation on communication of gifted patients (2)

- Presentation of complaints by gifted adult:
  - Has much information already
  - Talks in detail
  - Does not want to be pitied
  - Does not want to ask for help (autonomy)
  - .....?

### Deliberation on communication of gifted patients (3)

- Emotions:
  - Bad experiences in the past
  - Tries hard to be (a) 'patient'
  - Does not want to offend the doctor
  - Is anxious not to get a psychiatric diagnosis
  - .....?

### Wishes & Needs of gifted patients

- Gifted patients want
  - ... to be heard
  - ... accurate and detailed information
  - ... adequate medical questioning by doctor
  - ... to be seen as an equal
  - ... shared decision making
  - ... openness of discussion
  - ... a doctor who can think out of the box
  - ...?

## Advice for gifted patients

### Plenary

- Your advice?



## Our advice for gifted patients

- Be clear about your needs
  - to yourself
  - to your doctor
- Your style of communicating with your doctor
  - Respect doctors' education and expertise
  - Pay doctors compliments
  - Do not be afraid of rejection
  - Be careful in your way of asking questions
- Ask for your doctor's notes
- Take a companion
- Sometimes: look for another doctor



## Advice for doctors of gifted patients

### Plenary

## Our advice for doctors of gifted patients

- Listen well and actively
- Ask precise questions
- Answer questions
- Take ideas of patients seriously
- Do not feel threatened by the gifted patient
- Deal with gifted patients on an equivalent level, use shared decision making as much as possible
- Realize that gifted patients may be worried, even if they do not show it
- Give sound and detailed information and be honest if you do not know



## Is attention for giftedness necessary in the medical world? (1)

- 1. Illnesses/ complaints
  - Physical: allergies, (side) effects of drugs, ...
  - Mental: loneliness, adaptation disorders, other mental problems, misdiagnoses, double diagnoses
  - .....
  - .....

## Is attention for giftedness necessary in the medical world? (2)

### 2. Communication

- Information
- Need for shared decision making
- Disputes
- .....
- .....



## Discussion with neighbour



- Do gifted patients need a gifted doctor/ professional?
- Pro:
- Con:



## Best wishes

- for your health and
- for the health of all gifted people!



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