Nearly Every Person Will Experience a Diagnostic Error in Their Lifetime

— Institute of Medicine Sept 2015

A Physician’s Typical Day

9:10AM rash
10:05AM fainting spells
11:00AM chest pain
1:15PM breathing difficulty
2:10PM heartburn
3:00PM depression
3:50PM diarrhea
11:10AM chest pain
1:15PM breathing difficulty
2:10PM heartburn
3:00PM depression
3:50PM diarrhea

10:35PM HEADACHE
Diagnosed tension headache, did not realize workplace exposure to carbon monoxide.

5:30PM DIZZINESS
Diagnosed benign positional vertigo, missed cerebellar stroke.

Premature Closure: Diagnosis was first to come to mind, did not consider other possible diagnoses and failed to take a detailed patient history.

Anchoring Error: Locked in on a diagnosis based on initial symptoms and failed to adjust.

There are 250+
Possible Patient
Chief Complaints

1000s
of Possible Diagnoses

A New Study by the INSTITUTE of MEDICINE Reveals...

5% ERROR!

...more than 5% of diagnoses are in error, translating to...

5% IOM ambulatory error rate
20 Average number of patient visits per physician per day
34% Percentage of visits involving a diagnostic question
62 Average number of diagnostic errors per physician per year
184 Average number of days worked per year per physician
3,680 Patient visits per year per physician
295,000 Number of primary care physicians, NPs and PAs in the United States
18,437,000 Estimated number of primary care diagnostic errors per year in the United States

It is PUZZLING to see how LITTLE has been INVESTED in Improving Diagnosis

$28 BILLION spent on electronic health records
$10 BILLION ICD 9 to ICD 10 conversion
$1.5 BILLION spent on hospital advertising
$12 BILLION spent on hospital consultants
$0 What the Fed has budgeted to reduce diagnostic error

Each Patient Is Different

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