

Editorial. A pediatrician's appointment: a meeting point

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It sometimes seems as if we lived in a reign where lack of communication prevails. It is becoming more difficult to establish a fruitful dialogue with our couples, siblings, friends and colleagues and, of course, with the patients who visit us daily. Curiously enough, pediatricians can know more about those families than about any of our cousins. Lack of time, stress, immediacy culture (which implies a bad use of emergency services) and masses make our appointments be what they should not be: a conflictive place.

Time and service organization plays a crucial role in the genesis of some of the conflicts we have with the families we visit. And they know that. But they also know that that is not all. Ourselves, yes, ourselves, doctors, the ones who sit at the other side of the table with their prejudices, values, "crazes", labels and so on. They know us well. Families notice that we won't take long to interrupt them when they tell us what the problem is. We need time. We are aware that it is sometimes difficult to explore new knowledge fields or upbringing models when we face a family who only feeds with milk, eggs and vegetables or another who arrives after having a look on the Internet. They, as well as us, have the opportunity to discover that there are some crucial appointments and for that reason, they need to stop the clock and, of course, the whole world.

All together, families and professionals would be benefited if we declare our clinic working place, a space free from phone calls, unexpected open doors, misunderstandings, labelled diagnosis and prejudices. Many of these situations destroy magic sentences or invade intimacy and the sorrow of red eyes which cry a lot.

It would be positive to expel from this working place – our consult – unmeasured notoriety, excessive paternalism and selfishness. And we should promote active listening, empathy, humbleness and sincerity above all, and on behalf of everyone, families and professionals.

The consult would be an environment to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, the basis for medical decisions and a place where courtesy and politeness are common for those who visit it.

In a consult, both professionals and families can listen with calmness; look at their eyes with interest and trust. Those would be the starting point for effective and quality communication and so, our consult would be a meeting point.

If a doctor worries about parents' doubts and fears, he looks into their expectations and shares his discoveries, thus mutual understanding is promoted. Hence, possible distrust is removed with parents who "know a lot" and it would be replaced by the astonishment of discovering what mutual interest towards siblings has led to look into.

The doctor could propose and negotiate and hence, the fulfilment of the recommended treatment is much better. He would offer families more tools to make decisions and less prescriptions, only the necessary ones. He would pay attention to emotions, words, music and lyrics.

Families would attend those meetings with happiness, trust and initiative that, although it has been repeated, is new, is born, develops and ends in a different way. They should question what they want to get from every meeting, establish the aims previously, write down the questions and, of course, the anxieties and frustrations related with child upbringing.

Someday someone said that dialogue is the best way to solve problems and health professionals and families know a lot about problems. It would be good to try to transform our meetings into special moments when communication is possible and time does not matter in this reign where lack of communication prevails. Thus, we would leave consults happy and satisfied. We (pediatricians and families) should ask for more time and a nicer environment so that this meeting makes medicine easier. Hence, medicine would be art and science as well as a way towards global understanding and growth.