

Diagnosis is a Major Component of the Procedure of a Doctor's visit. From the Point of View of Statistics, the Diagnostic Procedure Involves Classification Tests.

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Pathak V. Diagnosis is a Major Component of the Procedure of a Doctor's visit Involves Classification Tests. From the Point of View of Statistics, the Diagnostic Procedure. *Psych Ment Health Res* 2021;3(5):1.

Description

Medical diagnosis is the process of determining which disease or condition explains a person's symptoms and signs. It is most often referred to as diagnosis with the medical context being implicit. The information required for diagnosis is typically collected from a history and physical examination of the person seeking medical care. Often, one or more diagnostic procedures, such as medical tests, are also done during the process. Sometimes posthumous diagnosis is considered a kind of medical diagnosis. Diagnosis is often challenging, because many signs and symptoms are nonspecific, and can only be undertaken by registered and licensed health professionals. For example, redness of the skin (erythema), by itself, is a sign of many disorders and thus does not tell the healthcare professional what is wrong. Thus differential diagnosis, in which several possible explanations are compared and contrasted, must be performed. This involves the correlation of various pieces of information followed by the recognition and differentiation of patterns. Occasionally the process is made easy by a sign or symptom (or a group of several) that is pathognomonic. A diagnosis, in the sense of diagnostic procedure, can be regarded as an attempt at classification of an individual's condition into separate and distinct categories that allow medical decisions about treatment and prognosis to be made. Subsequently, a diagnostic opinion is often described in terms of a disease or other condition. (In the case of a wrong diagnosis, however, the individual's actual disease or condition is not the same as the individual's diagnosis.) A diagnostic procedure may be performed by various healthcare professionals such as a physician, physiotherapist, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist, nurse practitioner, healthcare scientist or physician assistant. This article uses diagnostician as any of these person categories. A diagnostic procedure (as well as the opinion reached thereby) does not necessarily involve elucidation of the etiology of the diseases or conditions of interest, that is, what caused the disease or condition. Such elucidation can be useful to optimize treatment, further specify the prognosis or prevent recurrence of the disease or condition in the future.

Detection of any deviation from what is known to be normal, such as can be described in terms of, for example, anatomy (the structure of the human body), physiology (how the body works), pathology (what can go wrong with the anatomy and physiology), psychology (thought and behavior) and human homeostasis (regarding mechanisms to keep body systems in balance). Knowledge of what is normal and measuring of the patient's current condition against those norms can assist in determining the

patient's particular departure from homeostasis and the degree of departure, which in turn can assist in quantifying the indication for further diagnostic processing. Even during an already ongoing diagnostic procedure, there can be an indication to perform another, separate, diagnostic procedure for another, potentially concomitant, disease or condition. This may occur as a result of an incidental finding of a sign unrelated to the parameter of interest, such as can occur in comprehensive tests such as radiological studies like magnetic resonance imaging or blood test panels that also include blood tests that are not relevant for the ongoing diagnosis.

Procedure

Complementing the already given information with further data gathering, which may include questions of the medical history (potentially from other people close to the patient as well), physical examination and various diagnostic tests. A diagnostic test is any kind of medical test performed to aid in the diagnosis or detection of disease. Diagnostic tests can also be used to provide prognostic information on people with established disease. Processing of the answers, findings or other results. Consultations with other providers and specialists in the field may be sought.

Differential diagnosis

The method of differential diagnosis is based on finding as many candidate diseases or conditions as possible that can possibly cause the signs or symptoms, followed by a process of elimination or at least of rendering the entries more or less probable by further medical tests and other processing, aiming to reach the point where only one candidate disease or condition remains as probable. The final result may also remain a list of possible conditions, ranked in order of probability or severity. Such a list is often generated by computer-aided diagnosis systems.

The resultant diagnostic opinion by this method can be regarded more or less as a diagnosis of exclusion. Even if it does not result in a single probable disease or condition, it can at least rule out any imminently life-threatening conditions. Unless the provider is certain of the condition present, further medical tests, such as medical imaging, are performed or scheduled in part to confirm or disprove the diagnosis but also to document the patient's status and keep the patient's medical history up to date. If unexpected findings are made during this process, the initial hypothesis may be ruled out and the provider must then consider other hypotheses.

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Received date: December 03, 2021; Accepted date: December 14, 2021; published date: December 23, 2021



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