

Strategies to Effectively Communicate Diagnostic Uncertainty to Patients, Families, and Caregivers

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Uncertainty in Medicine

“Medicine is a science of uncertainty and an art of probability”

-Sir William Osler

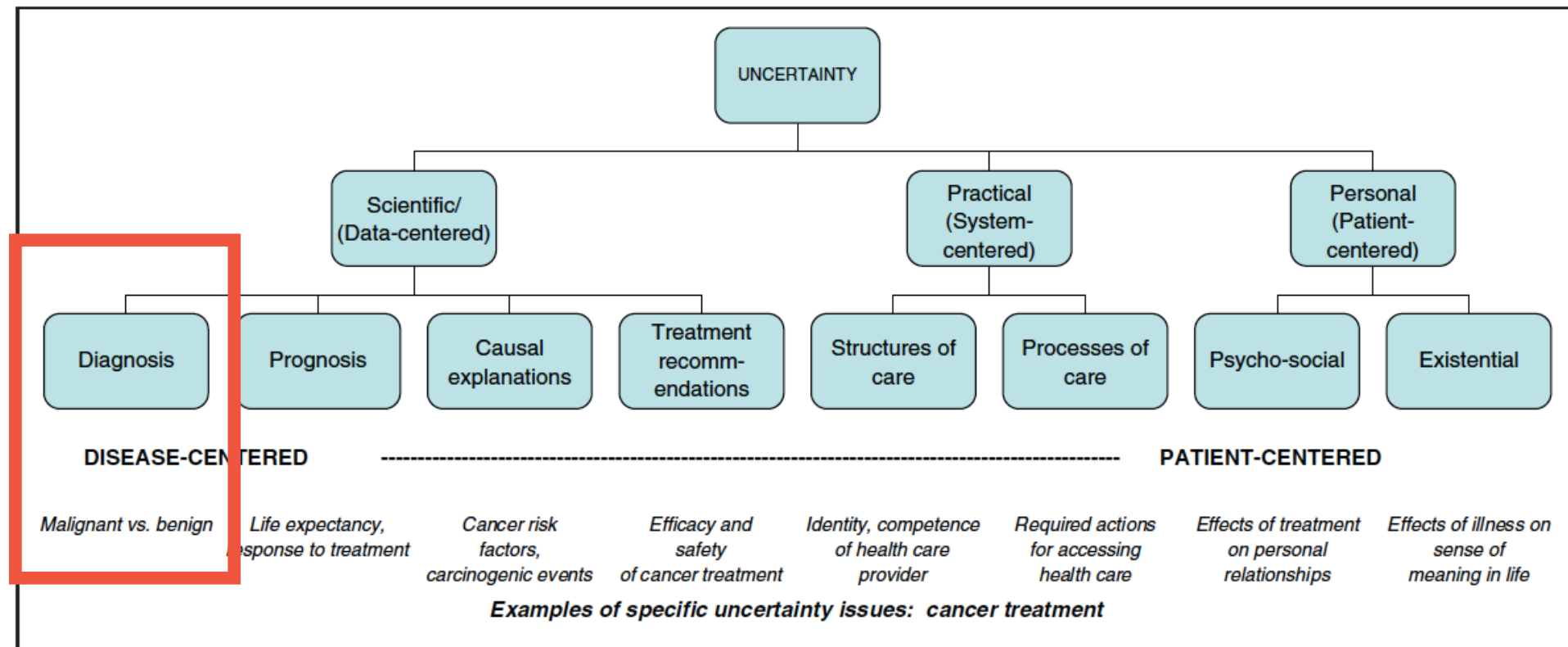
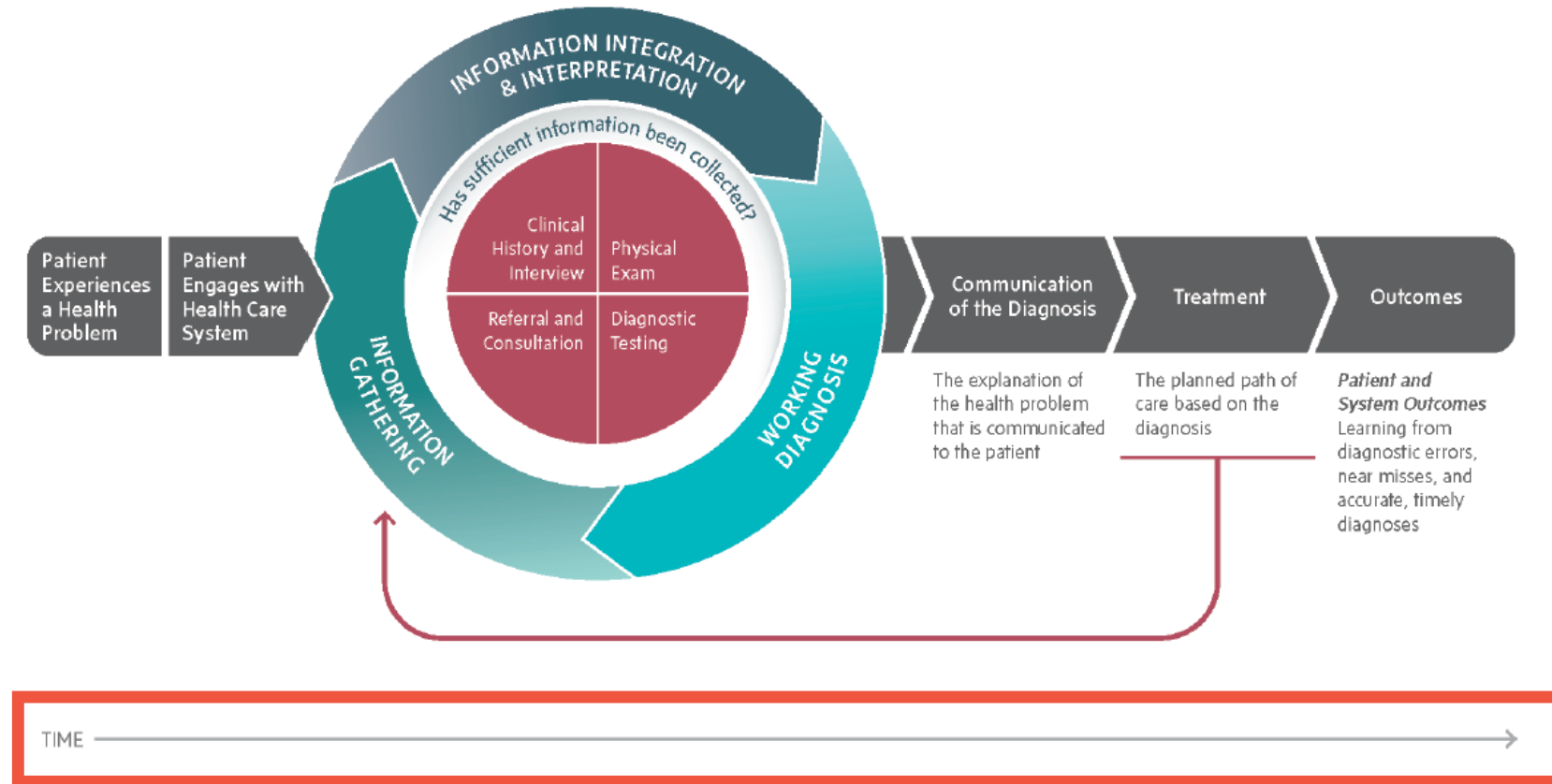


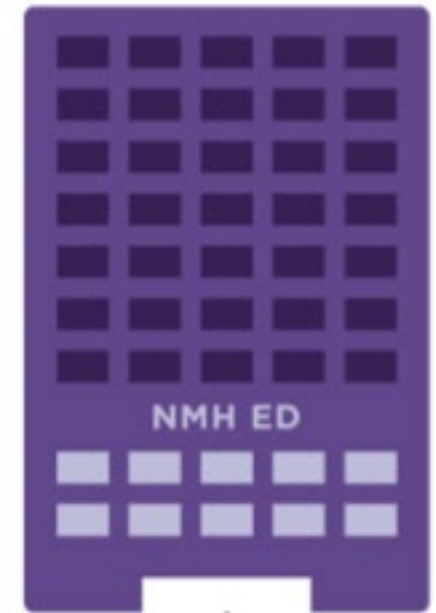
Figure 2. Issues of uncertainty in health care.

Time in the Diagnostic Process



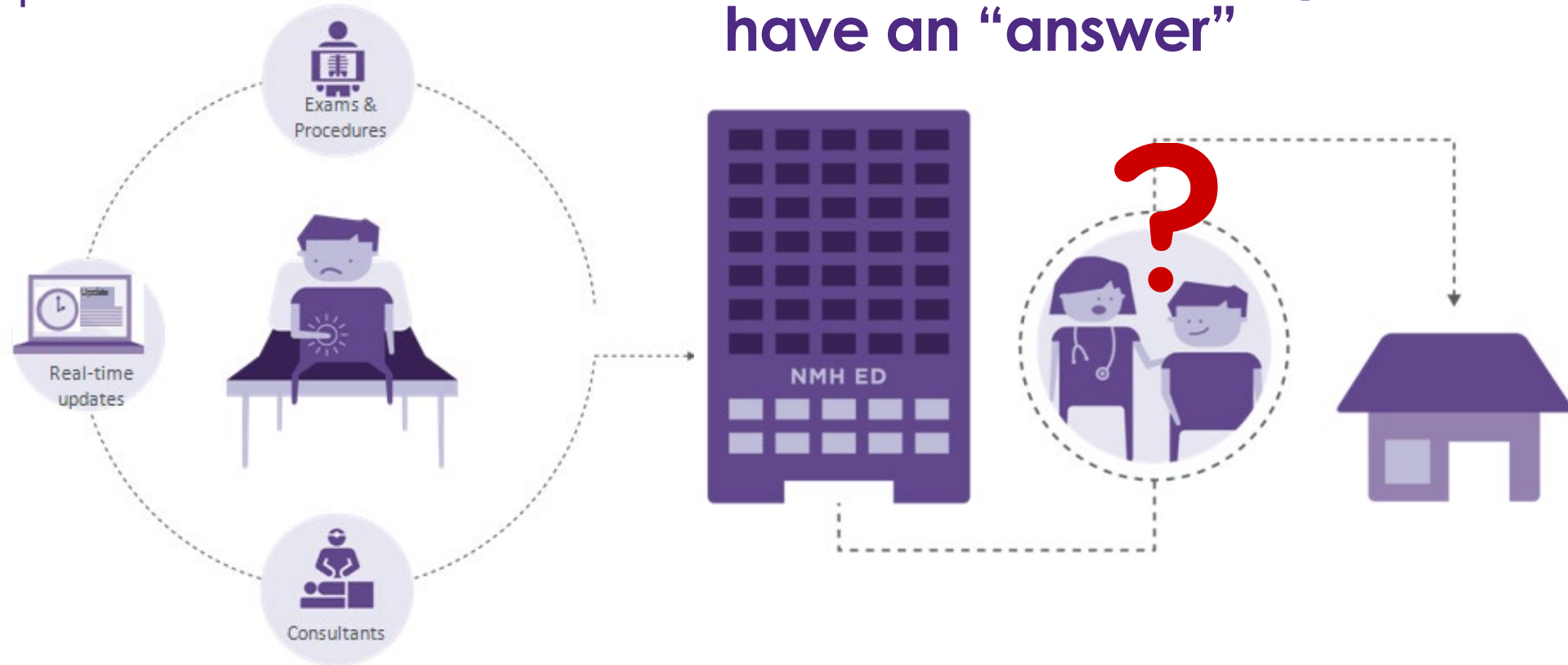
The National Academies Press, from Improving Diagnosis in Health Care, by Ball, J., Miller, B. T., Balogh, E., The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Committee on Diagnostic Error in Health Care, Board on Health Care Services, Institute of Medicine, 2015

Patients come to the ED seeking answers for what is causing their symptoms

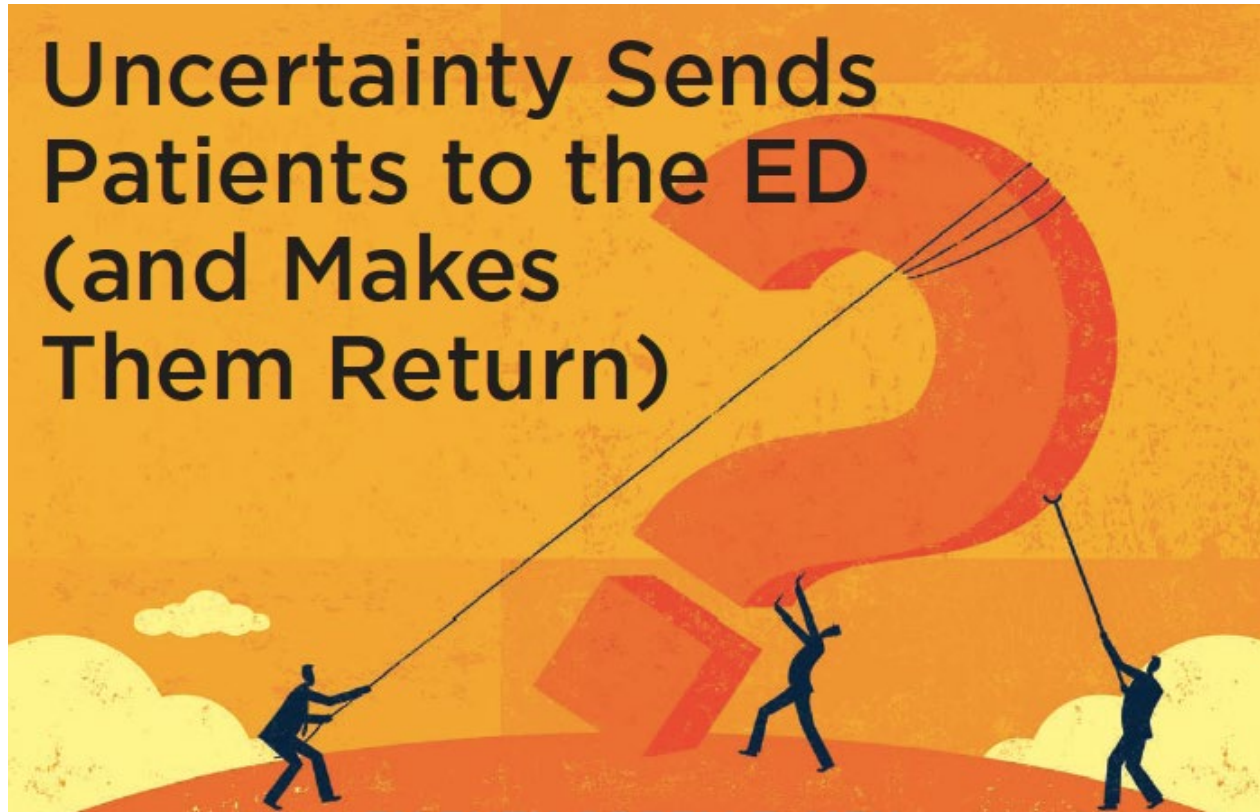


We can often “rule out”
immediately dangerous
problems

...but we don't always
have an “answer”



Patient Perspective



EM News 2018, © 2018 Wolters Kluwer Health Inc

For many patients, the primary reason for return is “fear and uncertainty about their condition”

Rising Annals of EM 2015
Rising Annals of EM 2016

Uncertainty tolerance

Uncertainty is often distressing

People seek care to reduce uncertainty

Every patient has different level of “uncertainty tolerance”



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Patient Perspective



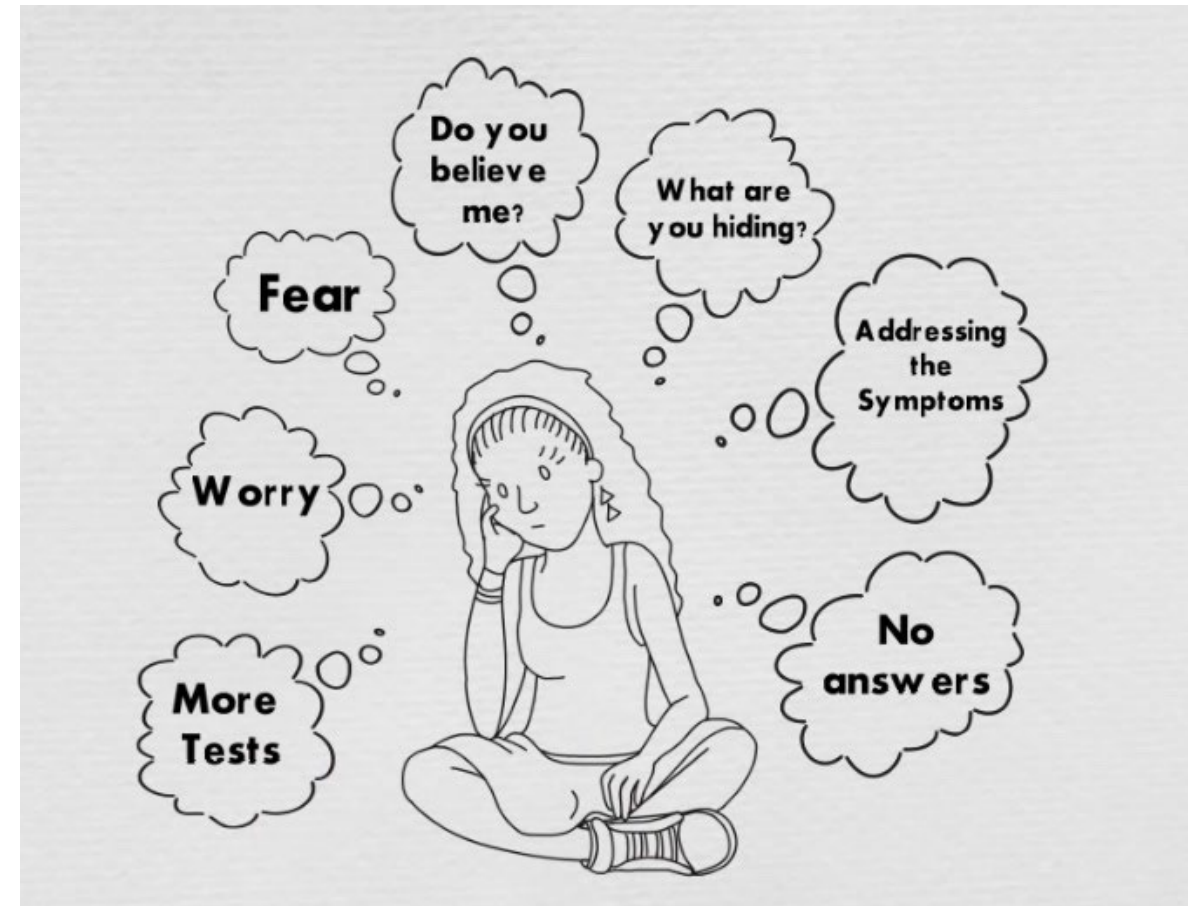
*“I just hope I look more **desperate**, and so they would really test whatever needs to be tested. Something has to pop up this time. **I just truly need a diagnosis.** I can’t walk out of here with, “Well, we don’t know for sure...”*



*“They just put chest pain, and I’m just lost, like, okay, well, what did they find? **They just leave you lost.** Like, they take care of you, but they leave what’s wrong with you between them instead of sharing it with you.”*

Why does it matter?

37%



Promoting Safe Care Transitions: Simulation-based mastery learning to improve communication in times of diagnostic uncertainty (AHRQ R18HS025651)

Aim 1: To define key principles of uncertainty communication competency.

→Development of the Uncertainty Communication Checklist

Aim 2: To develop a simulation-based mastery learning curriculum to teach effective patient communication regarding diagnostic uncertainty.

Aim 3: To test the efficacy of a simulation-based mastery learning curriculum in establishing competency in communication of diagnostic uncertainty among resident physicians.

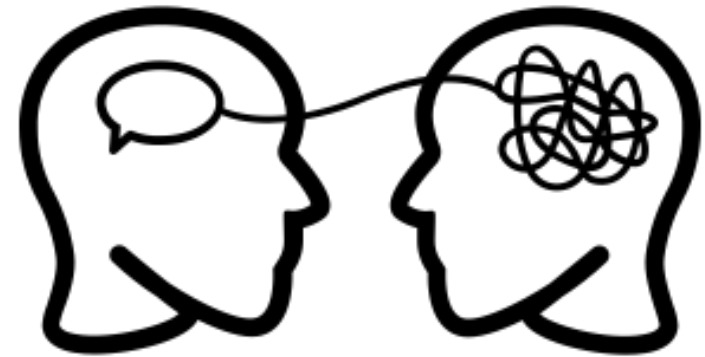
Goals

Goal ≠ Eliminate Uncertainty

- Help patients to manage uncertainty
- Feel safe going home

Conversational Framework

- Provide key topics for clinicians to discuss that matter to patients



Patient Perspective



“All they had to do was tell me we’re not sure what’s wrong, and the next step would be probably imaging, but we can’t do your imaging because A, B, C, and D. And I would have said okay.”



“I needed to know, for what time frame it would be preventing me from going through my day-to-day normal life routine.”

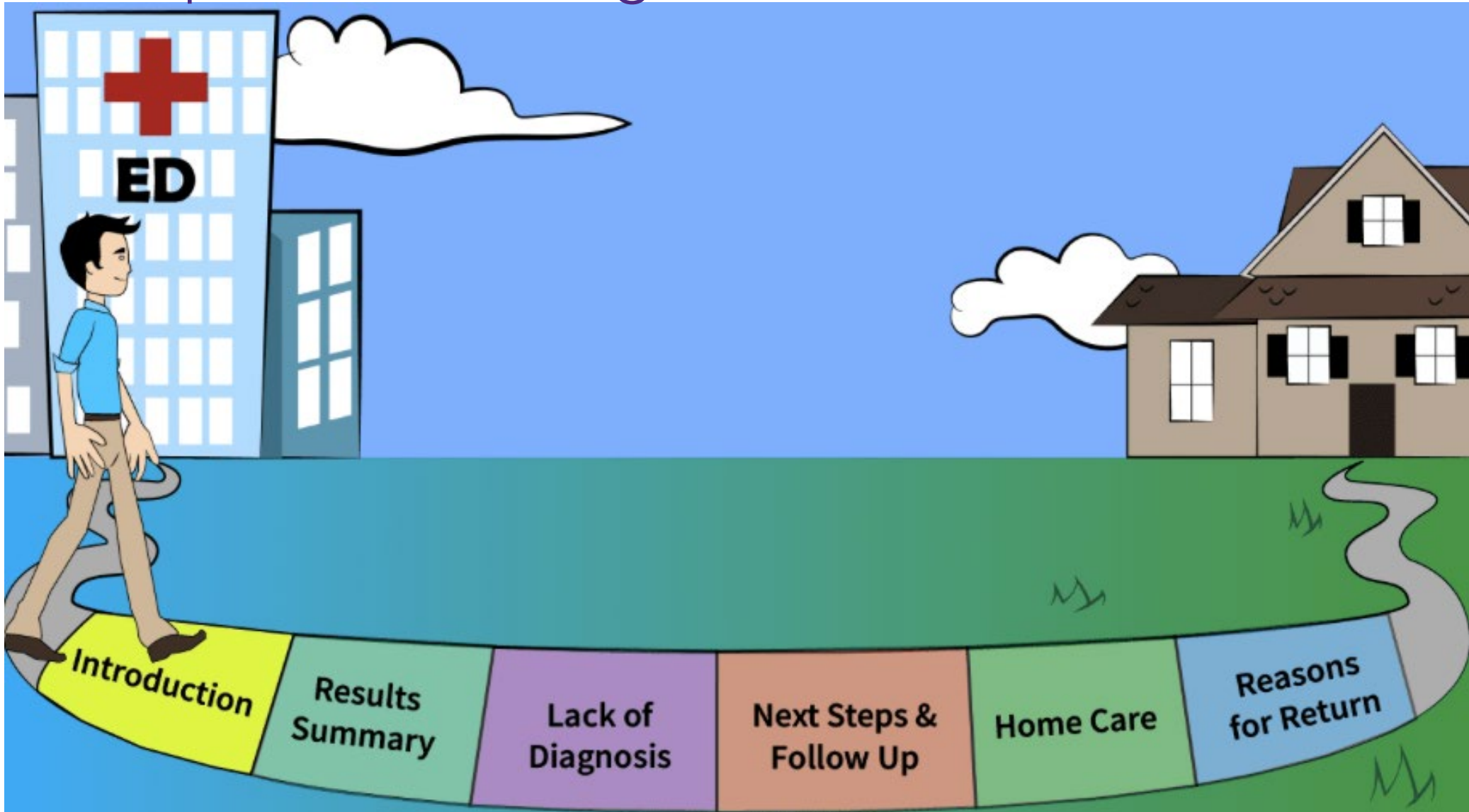


Development of the Uncertainty Communication Checklist: A Patient-Centered Approach to Patient Discharge From the Emergency Department

Kristin L. Rising, MD, MSHP, Rhea E. Powell, MD, MPH, Kenzie A. Cameron, PhD, MPH, David H. Salzman, MD, MEd, Dimitrios Papanagnou, MD, MPH, Amanda M.B. Doty, MS, Lori Latimer, MSW, Katherine Piserchia, William C. McGaghie, PhD, and Danielle M. McCarthy, MD, MS

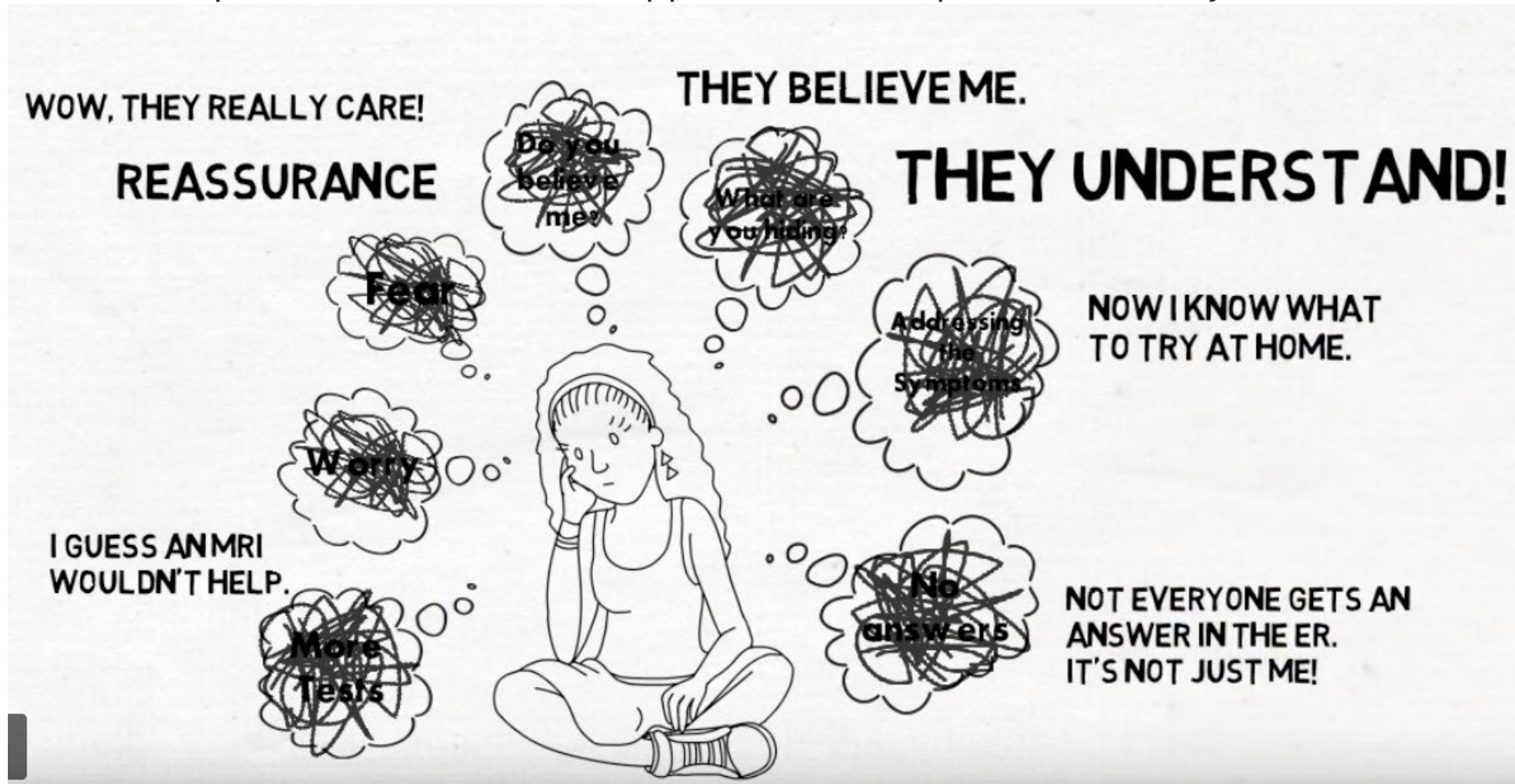


Smoother path to discharge

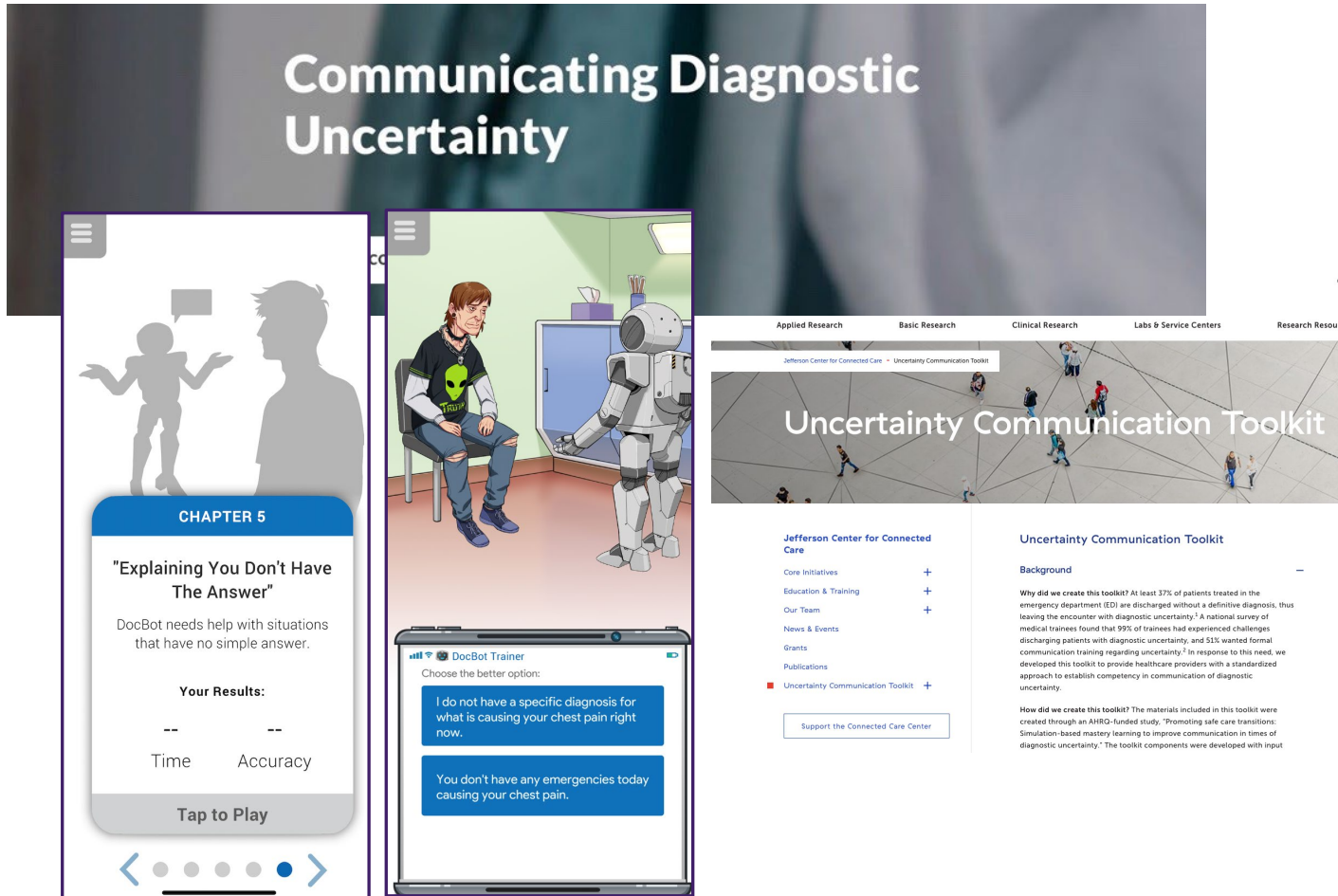


What is success?

Next step to measure patient outcomes once applied in clinical practice → trial just started



Tools available



Toolkit

- Uncertainty Communication Checklist
- 8 Standardized Patient training videos
- 16 simulation cases
- Uncertainty Communication Education Module links
 - Rise Module
 - Game in App store

9 publications



Thank you

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Feinberg School of Medicine