

# Delivering patient choice in clinical practice: a conversation analytic study of communication practices used in neurology clinics to involve patients in decision-making

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## Plain English summary

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# Plain English summary

## Aims

The National Health Service (NHS) is committed to offering patients more choice. We aimed to find out how doctors offer patients choice.

## How the study worked

The study took place in neurology clinics in Glasgow and Sheffield. Fourteen neurologists, 223 patients and 120 accompanying others took part. We video- and audio-recorded neurology appointments. Doctors and patients also completed questionnaires about their appointments.

## What we found out

Patients said they had been given a choice in more than 70% of appointments. Doctors said they had offered choice in more than 65% of appointments. Patients were not more satisfied with conversations in which they had been given choice. Patients and doctors disagreed about whether or not choice had been offered in about one-third of appointments. Doctors and patients almost always agreed that choice had been offered when patients had been given a list of options and asked for their views. It was important that doctors avoided giving their own views first. Doctors sometimes asked patients for their views when there was only one possible option. It was difficult for doctors to give enough information about one option without sounding like they were recommending that option.

## Conclusions

Choice is a feature of most of the appointments we recorded. Option-listing can increase patients' sense that they can choose their tests or treatments. However, whether or not choice is best for a particular patient will depend on many factors. Our findings can help doctors make sensible choices about how to involve patients in making decisions.

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