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December 12th at 5:00 P.M.!
 Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday. The **Christmas Party will be Friday, November's** meeting will be on the third Wednesday, **Nov 19th**, due to **PLEASE BRING THEM! CONTACT ROSITA HUCKEA AT 478/987-7220** ** WE NEED ITEMS SO the 17th Yard Sale (First Week in October).

President's Corner: Reminders - **Next Month (September) we'll meet on the 17th!** **Yard Sale (First Week in October).** ** WE NEED ITEMS SO PLEASE BRING THEM! CONTACT ROSITA HUCKEA AT 478/987-7220 **
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Meeting Dates/Time: **Wednesday, August 27th** and **Wednesday, September 17th** (10:00 A.M.)
 Location: Wellston Center - 152 Maple Street | Warner Robins, GA 31093

Choice
 August 2008 | Volume 12 - 8
 Monthly
 Warner Robins, Georgia
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Tammy Blanding of ANEP will speak on anorexia and other eating disorders.

SEE DOCTOR MISTAKES >>

How do doctors think through a case? Making an accurate diagnosis involves arranging the information from the patient's symptoms - findings from physical examination and laboratory tests - into a pattern. A doctor then superimposes this pattern onto a template of the typical case that exists in his or her mind. But this effort at pattern recognition doesn't always work. Why not?

Unfortunatley, medical misdiagnosis is not a rare phenomenon. About **15 percent** of all patients are **misdiagnosed**, and half of those face serious harm, even death, because of the error. Contrary to the general impression that most misdiagnoses result from a technical foul-up, such as mistabelling someone's X-ray or mixing up a blood specimen in the laboratory, most cases are due to *mistakes in the mind of the doctor.*

Not long ago I spoke with a middle-aged woman whose mother had been misdiagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. The elderly woman's memory was fading, and her family was close to admitting her to a nursing home. Luckily, the family decided to get a second opinion from a neurologist at a different hospital. It turned out the woman did not have Alzheimer's at all but, rather, vitamin B12 deficiency, a well-recognized cause of dementia. Her mild anemia, also due to vitamin B12 deficiency, had been written off by her internist as being due to "old age." Injections with the vitamin fully reversed the anemia and restored her thinking.

Why (How) Doctors Make Mistakes
 (Jerome Groopman, M.D., | AARP Magazine Sep/Oct 2008)
Too often, physicians make snap decisions. Here are three questions to help get you to the right diagnosis.

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 Greg (Formerly Known As "Da Baby") Davis ggd ©
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 year! Thank you! ggd ©
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DOCTOR MISTAKES (Continued)

- 1. "What else could it be?"** This question helps to prevent an anchoring error or an availability error, where a diagnosis is formulated too quickly in the physician's mind because it corresponds to the initial symptom or abnormality (**anchoring**) or because it is most familiar to the doctor (**availability**).
- 2. "Could two things be going on to explain my symptoms?"** In medical school doctors are taught to be parsimonious in their thinking, meaning they are taught to identify a single cause to explain a variety of complaints and symptoms. But sometimes a patient can have two medical problems simultaneously. Physicians sometimes stop searching once they find an initial problem, even if the patient does not fully recover.
- 3. "Is there anything in my history, physical examination, laboratory findings, or other tests that seems not to fit with your working diagnosis?"** All physicians tend to discount information that seems to contradict their hypothesis. This bias can lead a doctor down the wrong path; his or her anchor diagnosis may be so firmly fixed that this leads to ignoring contradictory data.

I have found that smart and dedicated physicians are able to explain their thinking, and they are able to put into clear and accessible lay language how they arrived at their working diagnosis. In some instances these questions may cause the doctor to go back and reexamine assumptions, to think again, and to come up with a different, and now correct, diagnosis. All doctors want the best treatment for their patients, and the best treatment involves the most open-minded thinking.

Jerome Groopman, M.D., is the author of the New York Times bestseller **"How Doctors Think"** (Mariner Books, 2008). **ggd** ©



A 75-year-old man went to the doctor's office to get a sperm count. The Doctor gave the man a jar and said, "Take this jar home and bring me back a sample tomorrow."

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The next day, the 75-year-old man reappears at the doctor's office and gives him the jar, which is as clean and empty as the previous day.

The doctor asks what happened, and the man explains, "Well, Doc, it's like this. **First** I tried with my right hand, but nothing. **Then** I tried with my left hand, but nothing. **Then** I asked my wife for help. She tried with her **right hand**, but nothing. Then with **her left**, but nothing. She even tried with her **mouth**, first with her **teeth in**, then with her **teeth out**, and still nothing. Hell, we even called up the **lady next door**, and she tried with **both hands** and her **mouth** too, but nothing."

The doctor was shocked. "You asked your neighbor?"

The old man replied, "'**no matter what we tried, we couldn't get that damn jar opened!**'"

