

Letter to the Editor: The Doctor-Patient Relationship in the Age of Evidence-Based Health Care (and Not the “Post-Managed Care Era”): A Response to G. Caleb Alexander and John D. Lantos

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While Alexander and Lantos (2006) allege to be describing the status of the doctor-patient relationship (DPR) in the “post-managed care era”, they instead uphold the epistemic assumptions indicative of an age of evidence-based healthcare (EBHC). This is most evident in their conclusion that the increasingly impersonal DPR “may not indicate a decline in the quality of medical care but an improvement brought about through an appropriate valuation of what really works to improve health” (29). EBHC promotes a fragmented account of medical knowledge where efficacious and appropriate medical action is best determined outside of the clinical encounter by individuals who have no direct familiarity with the patient (namely biostatisticians and clinical epidemiologists). This, in effect, takes authority away from the practitioner and silences any epistemic legitimacy that patients may have regarding their illness and treatment. In this framework, the erosion of the DPR is not merely, as

the authors claim, “inevitable”, but also not of much consequence to medicine’s endeavour to improve health. This bracketing of the individual patient in favor of a highly rationalised, population-based and fragmented approach to healthcare has been criticised by opponents of EBHC for being detrimental to individual patient care. While the naming of era post-*anything* usually refers to a moment of critical reflection on the dominant logic of the previous era (whether “managed care” or “modernity”), “The Doctor-Patient Relationship in the Post-Managed Care Era” does not challenge the prevailing thinking behind managed care and EBHC. ■

REFERENCE

Alexander, G. C., and J. D. Lantos. 2006. The Doctor-patient relationship in the post-managed care era. *American Journal of Bioethics* 6(1): 29–32.