

The patient-doctor relationship in the era of internet and e-health

There are three models of patient-doctor relationship. The traditional paternalistic model of the sovereign doctor has been replaced from the “informed-consent” model of the seemingly sovereign/responsible patient, who decides segmentally for a specific medical act but who has not an oversight of his health-situation. The shared decision making model appears to be a convincing alternative to the pragmatic and ethical disadvantages of the other models, since it is based on the continuous and symmetrical collaboration of doctor and patient in every stage of their relationship and not only in the stage of the final choice of a therapy. New technologies can facilitate the communication of doctors and patients both administrative and clinical. Electronic scheduling of appointments, personal health records and email communication instead of unnecessary visits are some of the positive faces of “e-health”. The most common but not always the most safe online tool in health sector refers to the use of internet as an information source. The enormous amount of information, the difficulty to differentiate the credible from the misleading information or the inability of the patient to connect the abstract and general knowledge with his individual situation are some of the dangers that internet entails. Doctors should see the patient, that wants to know or already knows not as a threat against the “medical omnipotence”. They should encourage und help him to control the credibility of information. A correct use of new technologies can lead to a new model of patient doctor relationship, that will satisfy the ethical standards.