To: Physicians  
From: Felix Boakye-Afriyie  
Re: Investing time in Patients’ lives to promote better care

Physicians need to acknowledge that there are many other factors related to their patients’ health beyond the bounds of infections and genetics. In a given community there can be social constructs of illness, health beliefs and perceptions that affect the role of health institutions and health professionals in that society. From influences of ethnicity, gender, age, or socioeconomic status, these complexities within patients’ life all govern their ability to attain access and quality to better health. Some of these factors needs to be known by physicians in order to provide quality care to their patients in that demographic.

Physicians need to be more aware about their patients’ life to provide lasting care to patients. To do so, physicians should know more about reference groups and local cultures within their practicing communities:

- To learn more things in their patients’ community cannot directly be controlled by them but still plays a role as determinants of their health (i.e.: playground or a Fast-food franchise at every corner)
- To learn more about how a community that has access to good quality of education is a reflects of the income and social status of the individuals living in it

The benefits of being more informed about your patients’ lives will allow physicians:

- To find sources of nutritional food and local farmers markets for their patients where food can be purchase at reasonable prices.
- Provide patients with educational brochures on how the income and social status of a person can cause them to lose control over what they deemed as a necessity in their life.
- Realistically provide them with advise on proper ways to eat healthy on their budget and ways to used their daily environment to exercise (i.e.: going to the park with the entire family so that the children can play)

All of these information come be provided by physicians if they invest time in their patients’ lives. Consequently, physicians will be able to develop better relationship with the patients and tailor specific medical practices around the patient’s lifestyle.

Additional information: