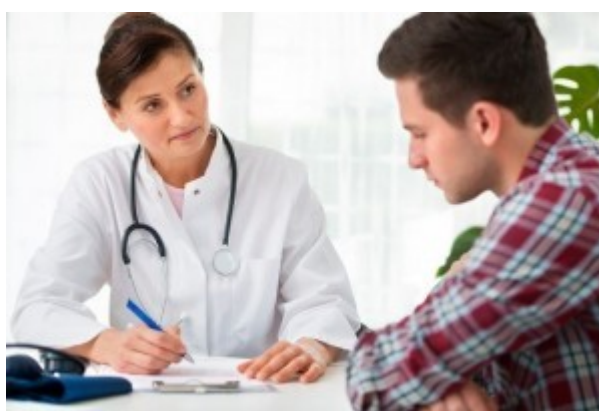


Doctors & Nurses Agree: Everyone Is a Poor Historian

ATLANTA, GA - Frustrated because you can't get the details you want from a patient? Don't worry, you're not the only one. A recent eye-opening poll held on the world-renowned medical website [Facebook](#) found that doctors, nurses, and everyone else in health care agree about one fundamental thing about patients when they present to a health care system: everyone, absolutely everyone, is a poor historian, no ifs ands or buts.

"I recently had a patient come in with pain," explained EM physician Ted Stelling, as he clicks "unable to obtain history" on his electronic medical record's admission document. "What kind of pain? Beats me. He didn't know when it started or how long it's been going on. When I asked where his pain was, he sweepingly gestured with his arms from head to toe. Gee, great, thanks." He amended his note in an all-too-familiar way: "Patient is a poor historian."



"My favorite answer is when they tell you it's on the computer," responded internist Jorge Gonzalez, as he rolls his eyes into the back of his skull. "Sir, you just told me you haven't seen a doctor in 50 years, I'm pretty sure it's not on the computer." Gonzalez alters his note: "Patient is a woefully poor historian of epic proportions. Epic."

A thorough two-minute literature search on PubMed revealed only one case study of a "good" historian way back in 1972, though the case was confounded by a "bad" physician who asked the patient only one question: her favorite color. In 1994, epidemiologists worldwide declared the "good" historian extinct, a true relic of the past.

"There are several characteristics of a poor historian," said family physician Samantha Monroe, as she fills out yet another empty history and physical exam. "One, the patient has some poor excuse like being altered, demented, or

[intubated](#). Two, the patient is tangential, uncooperative, or simply not helpful. Three, and most importantly, they answer a question wrong. In my book, one question wrong and you're a poor historian."

Surprisingly, the [Facebook](#) poll found this universal: 100% of health care practitioners declared the patient a "poor historian" if he or she answered one question wrong.

"Doctors and nurses aren't joking, believe me," expressed esteemed Professor Amanda Norton of Cornell University's Department of History. "Last time I was in the ER, someone asked me what blood pressure medication I was taking. I couldn't remember one of them. Little did I know I was forever labeled. *This* historian is a poor historian."

"I couldn't remember the capital of Portugal," said patient Jennifer Dawes, recalling a past clinic visit. "I can't believe I'm now a poor historian because of that!"

Though health care practitioners have little hope in the future of medicine as we know it, [they do dream one day](#) of even a "decent" historian. Primary care physician Meg Stevens has some advice to her future health care consumers. "Tell us the honest reason why you're here and don't be difficult; that's a great start. Carry a medication list or take a picture of them on your [smartphone](#)? You'll have earned a gold star for life!"