

25 steps to diminish diagnostic errors

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Know thy patient:

1. **H and P:** obtaining a thorough history and doing a focused yet comprehensive exam is still the key and will remain so
2. **Organize:** symptoms and signs systematically as problems for clarity of thought
3. **Time out:** don't rush your thoughts, there's a reason professional sports have time outs
4. **Ask:** if you are unsure of a sign/symptom/problem or its interpretation ask around
5. **Use:** as many resources as possible to gather knowledge and facts...this is not USMLE!
6. **Identify:** patterns of symptoms and signs which can fit a diagnosis
7. **Never:** rush to fit a pattern to a particular diagnosis. If patterns don't fit keep looking
8. **Keep:** your mind open even if a patient comes to you with a known diagnosis
9. **Remember:** uncommon presentations of common conditions are generally more common than common presentations of uncommon conditions
10. **Differentiate:** between signal and noise
11. **Know:** your community/hospital system and the common conditions that come
12. **Question:** your diagnosis if new symptoms or signs come up
13. **Revisit:** your diagnosis periodically as new diagnostic tools, treatments and conditions are described
14. **Don't:** miss conditions that you can treat or which can become catastrophic if delayed

Know thy tests:

15. **Don't:** be afraid to order tests but know their limitations
16. **Value:** of a test depends on the pre-test probability of a particular condition. In other words your clinical suspicion
17. **Tests:** can be ordered to confirm a diagnosis, rule out a diagnosis or differentiate between identical conditions.
18. **Rarely:** tests will give you new information that you had never thought of in your H and P

Know thyself:

19. **Refer:** if a case beats your limitations
20. **Learn:** from each case- the ones you diagnosed and the ones you missed
21. **Observe:** how master clinicians make decisions and learn from them
22. **Humility:** takes you a long way as it's in the nature of medicine to make mistakes
23. **Update:** your knowledge periodically as medicine is a rapidly evolving science
24. **Team:** embrace the team concept and don't neglect data from allied healthcare personnel
25. **Patient:** centered care is sometimes more important than getting a diagnosis