

Patient/Parent Dialogue

A practical guide on the combined use of positive and negative treatment recommendations to reduce antibiotic prescribing and improve patient visit ratings

In 2015 Dr. Rita Mangione-Smith and colleagues performed a cross-sectional study of 1,285 pediatric visits for acute respiratory tract infection (ARTI) symptoms. Providers and parents completed post-visit surveys and multivariate analyses identified key predictors of prescribing antibiotics and of parent visit ratings. Suggesting actions parents could take to reduce their child's symptoms (providing positive treatment recommendations) was associated with decreased risk of antibiotic prescribing whether done alone or in combination with negative treatment recommendations (ruling out the need for antibiotics) [adjusted risk ratio (aRR) 0.48; 95% CI, 0.24-0.95; and aRR 0.15; 95% CI, 0.06-0.40, respectively]. Parents receiving combined positive and negative treatment recommendations were more likely to give the highest possible visit rating (aRR 1.16; 95% CI, 1.01-1.34).

Combined use of positive and negative treatment recommendations may reduce the risk of antibiotic prescribing for children with viral ARTIs and at the same time improve visit ratings.

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THE TREATMENT RECOMMENDATION IS ONE PACKAGE COMPRISING 4 KEY PARTS:

MAKE THE CASE
FOR THE
DIAGNOSIS

DELIVER THE
NEGATIVE
RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOW
IMMEDIATELY
WITH THE
POSITIVE
RECOMMENDATION

PROVIDE A
CONTINGENCY
PLAN

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EXAMPLE DIALOGUE:

DIAGNOSIS

So it looks like he has a yucky cold.

NEGATIVE
REC

On the one hand, there's no medicine that will make it go away. Having yellow-green mucous doesn't mean he has a bacterial infection, so antibiotics won't help.

POSITIVE
REC

On the other hand, there are many things you can do to make him feel better. First thing is lots of rest and lots of fluids. Raising his head at night can help drain his congestion, so you might give him an extra pillow. You can also run a humidifier in his bedroom at night, which can help loosen his congestion. And a teaspoon of honey can help with his cough.

CONTIGENCY
PLAN

If he isn't feeling better or he is getting worse in the next 2 days, please call our office to let us know.

Use of the “On the one hand...On the other hand” structure foreshadows that more information is coming and prevents interruption.