

ASSIGN. 3

Hi --, thanks for your reflections about your drug-seeking patient. I thought you made several important points. One is the negative consequences of the pejorative labels that become attached to patients. The labels might be “correct” as far as they go (the patient may indeed be “drug-seeking”) but they can be very reductive in the way they eliminate the patient’s complexity and humanity (in other words, your patient may be a drug-seeker who also loves his family). The other point you made that I thought was important was the idea of the patient viewing you as the “enemy.” In my view, we can’t control how others see us except by how we behave toward them, so my focus might be on not *acting* like the patient’s enemy (which can be harder than it seems, if the patient is demanding and angry and aggressive). Since I know you are a mom (and I was a mom once too!), I’d use this analogy. Sometimes we set limits on our kids not because we hate them but because we love them. You might not exactly “love” this patient, but you want to be clear that your actions emerge out of your best effort to determine what is in his best interest. You might not always be right (you might misjudge the functional vs. organic nature of his pain), but you are clean about your motivations as the patient’s physician. And like our kids, the patient may not always like us, but hopefully somewhere in his heart he will recognize that we’re on his side – NOT the enemy! :-) Best, Dr. Shapiro