

The “Difficult” Patient

APM Resident Education Curriculum

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Objectives

- Discuss characteristics of difficult patients
- Define personality styles/disorders
- Define “hateful” patient characteristics
- Discuss management issues for difficult patients.

The Consult

- *53 year old male, self-employed business owner, history of cocaine and alcohol abuse, hospitalized with osteomyelitis. Left prior hospitalization AMA.*

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What may make some providers consider this patient “difficult?”

Difficult Patients

- Consults often requested for patients who arouse negative emotions in the treatment team
- These emotions include anger, inadequacy, or frustration
- May occur in up to 15% of patient encounters (Jackson and Kroenke, 1999)

“The Hateful Patient”

- Groves in 1978 is considered the first to actually refer to a patient as “hateful”
- Difficult for the treatment provider to acknowledge his feelings to the patient
- May be noted in the wording of the consult or the frustration voiced by the treating team when discussing the patient with the consultant

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