

Triage: Not as Traumatic as You Think !



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The Hated Three Patient Calls

1. " My eye is red "
2. " I see double"
3. " I just suddenly went
blind in my eye"



Warnerbrothers.com

What the patient "says"
is not always what they
"mean" when they call in
with a problem or a
question - because
they *are not* medical !



Warnerbrothers.com

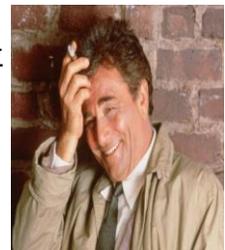
You need to **stop** what
you are doing and **listen**
to what the
patient is saying. This is not
a time for multi-tasking and
nodding knowingly -
because without some well
placed questions - you don't
know!



" It's all a big mystery to me "

When you are talking with the
patient, consider the
following - but do not let
it bias you:

- * Who
- * When
- * What
- * How
- * Where



columbo-site-freuzk.com

Which One Do You Pay The Most Attention To?

Granny :She's so sweet and *needy* and calls (3) times a week ?

Flo: she's coming in and sitting in the waiting room until the MD sees her..honey!



CBS TV - "Alice"

The FYI Patient

This is the patient that calls to *inform* you of an eye issue so that *you* will tell *them* they do not need to come in ! They have a number of reasons why they *can't* come in today - they just wanted their doctor to know it happened again !



They are "happy" to wait for a week for the next appointment with their doctor - and then will walk in with:



webeye.ophth.uiowa.edu

" My Eye Is Red "

- Is the white part of the eye red or is it your eyelid?
- Is it one eye or both ?
- When you went to bed last night, was your eye red ?
- Does your eye hurt right now?
- Has your vision changed in that eye since your eye got red?
- Is the eye red or do you see red in your vision?



www.flickr.com



meded.ucsd.edu

Scenario # 1

" My right eye is red. I woke up like this. No, I don't have any pain. My vision is fine. There is no drainage and it doesn't itch. I can't come in because I work for myself and I can't afford to lose the day. I don't remember getting anything in there. What do I do for work? I am a roofer. "

Patient **finally** agreed to come in that day.

What else would *you* have asked?



Conjunctival Laceration with Intraocular Metallic Foreign Body



jirehdesign.com



www.mrcophth.

Scenario # 2

" I am noticing that in the past few days that my vision is red. That's right...I *see* red. I don't have any pain. Yes - I closed one eye and my left eye is seeing red. No, I haven't had any injury to my eye. I stay home mostly and watch a lot of TV. Could I have hurt it watching too much TV? I can still see - it's just pinky is all. I'd rather not come in today because it is raining and I ride the bus."

After **much** discussion, she agreed to come in. What else would *you* have asked?



Diabetic Retinal Hemorrhage

This was a patient that had multiple no shows for the Retina specialist. He had scheduled her for laser treatments - she was afraid and never came. Patients can sometimes "see" red initially when they have a hemorrhage that is not dense. She had *proliferative diabetic retinopathy* and was rescheduled for the retina specialist for laser therapy.



Vitreous Hemorrhage



www.richmondeye.com

Scenario # 3

" Ok... here's the scoop...I was fooling around with my friends yesterday and now my eye is red and sore. And it hurts when I move it from side to side. What were we doing? We were having a pillow fight.

What? Yeah - I got hit with the pillow a few times. My vision is a little blurry, but I can't come in because I have a final this morning and you guys will put drops in me. I can come tomorrow. Ok... I will come in - but no drops. OK??"



Traumatic Hyphema Blow Out Fracture



aapos.org



www.abstractsonline.com



" I See Double"

- When did you notice you were seeing double?
- Do you have any pain when you move the eye?
- Side by side or up and down?
- Is your eyelid drooping on either side?
- Have you injured your eye recently?
- Have you had any head injury lately?
- * If you close one eye - do you still see double?



Scenario # 1

" I think something is wrong. I am having double vision in my eyes. I feel ok, but I am scared. No, I am not diabetic. When I look in the mirror, I look ok. It's very hard to drive - I just came back from the grocery store and I was scared to death.

Maybe I had a stroke. It runs in my family. But I feel ok. Should I come in?

Would you bring her in :

* ASAP * Tomorrow * Next week



Lens Missing Out Of Her Glasses

She arrived to the clinic a nervous wreck. She was convinced a stroke had occurred. When she was checking in, the receptionist casually told her that after she had her exam, the optician would be *happy* to put her lens back in her glasses if she brought it along ☺



Scenario # 2

" I woke up this morning with a pounding headache. And then I noticed that I was seeing double. I feel shaky. And when I move my eyes, I have pain. I probably have the start of the flu. We had the grandchildren this weekend and they all had it. Look in the mirror? Well ok. Yes, my eyelid *is* droopy today.

Why would you ask me that? But it was droopy yesterday, too. I *am* 73 you know - everything droops! Maybe I'll wait until I feel better to come in."

What else would *you* ask him?



Diabetic 3rd Nerve Palsy

Ask him if he's **diabetic!** When the 3rd nerve is involved, pain may be the prominent sign. The pupil is usually spared.

Double vision is sudden because of a paresis of the 3rd nerve. There also may be a ptosis on the affected side. You need to see this patient to differentiate between an aneurysm in the brain vrs 3rd nerve.

The key will be the pupil !!



eyesurgeryinberkshire.co.uk

Scenario # 3

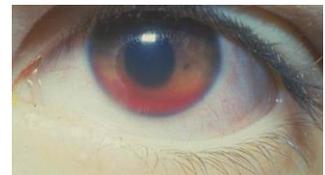
" Yesterday we had a family reunion and my little girl was playing badminton with her Uncle Pete. He's pretty competitive. Well, he smashed the birdie and it hit her in the eye. It's a little red around her eye, but she says she has a headache. *He* feels awful. Her vision is ok, but a little weird. She's going to camp tomorrow for a week. It's ok to send her still right?"



Traumatic Hyphema

No, she can't go to camp! Her pressure was 52 mm Hg. She had a low grade iritis. She also had commotio. Because she was (9)

years old, she was admitted to the hospital to keep *her* quiet as well as to facilitate getting her pressures under control.



" I Suddenly Went Blind Today"

That one statement is like giving directions to your house by starting with you live on Earth! It is a red herring to the *utmost* magnitude *because* instead of going blind...you just might "have had a thought"!



Scenario # 1

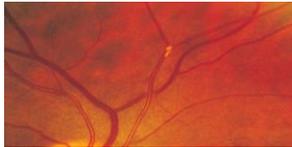
" I was watching TV last night and all of a sudden I went blind in my right eye for 20 minutes or so. Just like that. I covered one eye and then the other, and yup, it's my right eye. Black as night. Didn't hurt a bit. Well, no, I haven't had an eye exam in about 5 years...no need. I've always seen great - I was a fighter pilot in The Big One you know. The wife said I had to call. I'm the family chauffeur. Yeah, I have a little high cholesterol.. I'm a meat and potatoes guy! "



When will you bring him in?
 * Today * Tomorrow * Next available

Amaurosis Fugax

Transient vision loss for 5-10 minutes. Occurs most commonly due to retinal emboli from cholesterol plaque.



highered.mheducation.com



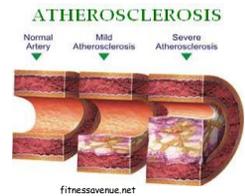
www.kellogg.unic.h.edu



Plaque can be from:

- * carotid artery (most common)
- * damaged cardiac valve (Afib or mitral valve)
- * platelet clot

Doctor will listen to the carotid for *bruits*.



? Scenario # 2 ?

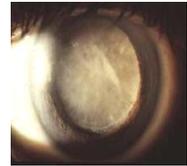
" I was watching TV last night and all of a sudden I went blind in my right eye. Just like that. I covered one eye and then the other, and yup, it's was my right eye. Black as night. Didn't hurt a bit. Well, no, I haven't had an eye exam in about 5 years...no need. I've always seen great - I was a fighter pilot in The Big One you know. The wife said I had to call. I'm the family chauffeur. Yeah, I have a little high cholesterol.. I'm a meat and potatoes guy! "



When will you bring him in?
 * Today * Tomorrow * Next available

Dense Cataract

This is called: having a thought . The patient did *not* go suddenly blind - he has had this mature cataract for quite awhile. He must have closed his good eye for some reason and noticed he was "blind" in the other eye. Hence...*he suddenly* is blind.



So...where does this leave us?

Triaging patient calls is like a cascading waterfall. **Listen** to what the patient is telling you. **Who** is telling you the history. **What** is it that the patient thinks has happened to them. **When** did this happen and **How** did it happen.



Watch for
Red Herrings...

They just might turn out to be
technician eating Great Whites!

