

Imperceptible Interventions that Change a Situation to Improve Health: That Red Dot in the Middle of the Painting

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ABSTRACT

The author's intention is to draw attention to the impact of general practitioner's actions on the patient, however small or insignificant they may seem. Thus, some of the doctor's actions are a "minimal stroke of genius," like when "a single, minimal, brilliant, almost imperceptible brushstroke in a painting surpasses the meticulous, ostentatious, and elaborate work of another painting that took years to complete." These are the simple, seemingly insignificant actions of the doctor that suddenly change the entire situation and produce significant benefits for improving health: 1. Washing hands in front of the patient; 2. The nocebo and placebo effects; 3. The "casual" question, "Tell me, what worries you most about what's happening to you?"; 4. The "closing" question ("Is there anything else that worries you?"); 5. The importance of nonverbal communication; 6. Medication reconciliation (reviewing what patient is taking); 7. Checking for understanding ("Explain to me what you're going to do"). The general practitioner must be consciously aware of these imperceptible moments that suddenly make the consultation shine.

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A high-impact, "silent" intervention would be the Platonic ideal of medicine [1]. Often, the best interventions are those that the patient doesn't even register as "treatment." They are almost magical interventions performed by competent physicians that surprise the novice [2,3].

On the other hand, frequently the most beneficial and least "visible" interventions are preventive ones. Preventive medicine seeks to reduce the chances of becoming ill or dying prematurely through actions that the patient barely notices in their routine, such as a vaccine or a dietary adjustment. Furthermore, effective communication is, in many cases, that invisible tool that improves adherence and recovery [4].

There is no absence of medical intervention, even when the physician does not consciously intervene with the patient. Non-intervention is a type of intervention. Non-intervention is a bio-fiction. A casual action or phrase by the physician can be a medical intervention in itself. The impact of a "casual" comment or gesture from a doctor is, paradoxically, one of the most visible factors in a patient's experience, capable of acting as either a powerful medicine or a subtle poison.

A famous example that illustrates this is the incident between the British landscape painters William Turner and John Constable at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 1832 [5,6]. There, Turner subtly humiliated Constable by adding a dot of bright red paint to his own painting, "Helvoetsluys" (now in the Fuji Art

Museum, Tokyo), which hung next to Constable's "The Opening of Waterloo Bridge" (now in Tate Britain) [7,8]. Constable had worked for years on his work, full of reds and golds, and Turner, with that brushstroke that looked like a "shot," stole the attention from the scene before turning it into a buoy.

It is said that when Turner saw Constable's painting, a monumental and vibrant canvas, full of flags and details in shades of red and gold, two meters high and two meters long, on which he had spent 15 years working, he was disconcerted by how little his own work compared to his rival's epic masterpiece. The undulating waves and tall sailboats of Turner's sober seascape were dwarfed by Constable's sumptuous and colorful evocation of the pomp that accompanied the bridge's inauguration, which dominated the space.

Turner entered the room, looked at his own painting, then at his rival's, and noticed that Constable's painting was too vibrant. He withdrew without a word, but returned shortly afterward, palette in hand, with only one color: red. In a moment of inspiration, he approached his canvas. In front of everyone, with astonishing calm, he added a touch of red to his canvas. A tiny dot, the size of a coin, in the middle of the sea, a stark contrast that eclipsed his rival's work! And he left the room in silence.

Constable, who was standing nearby, watched the scene in astonishment. The small red speck, with its glossy varnish, stole all the attention. Seeing this, Constable, with a mixture of admiration and resignation, exclaimed, "He's been here and fired a gun!" referring to the genius and aggressiveness of Turner's brushstroke, which had fired an artistic "cannon shot", leaving

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