

The Trivialization of Diagnosis

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Abstract:

Although it is widely recognized that diagnosis plays a central role in clinical medicine, in recent years the primacy of diagnosis has come under attack from several sources. 1. “Billable terms” are replacing traditional medical diagnoses. The former are based on International Classification of Diseases lists, which include many non-diagnoses such as symptoms and signs. 2. Diagnosis often gets short shrift because of the perceived urgency of discharge. 3. The problem oriented record, in practice, has frequently led to a shift in emphasis from synthesis of findings to fragmentation of problems. 4. Presumptive diagnoses frequently metamorphose into established diagnoses in medical records, even if incorrect. 5. A number of authors have apparently disparaged the importance of diagnosis. Nonetheless, it is clear that diagnosis must continue to play a central role in clinical medicine. We propose several ways by which we can resist these forces and assure that diagnosis retains its appropriate position of primacy.