



PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FAMILY PHYSICIANS

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Do family physicians tell ‘little white lies’? PAFP responds to recent study suggesting physician dishonesty

(HARRISBURG, PA.) Pennsylvania’s family physicians are unequivocally committed to the safety and health of their patients. So when we at the Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians heard about a recent study suggesting that doctors may put patients at risk by lying to them, we felt we had to set the record straight:

Pennsylvania’s family physicians are *not* dishonest.

The study, by researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital, involved nearly 1,900 doctors. According to the research, 10 percent of doctors said they’d lied to a patient in the previous year, while a third didn’t think they should disclose serious medical errors to their patients. The survey also showed almost 40 percent of doctors didn’t think they needed to disclose financial ties to medical device and drug companies.

An ongoing relationship between a physician and his or her patient is the crux of family medicine. It’s the calling of a family physician to interpret complex medical data and explain it to the patient honestly, in such a manner that he or she can make the best possible choice to ensure a safe and healthy life. While patients’ preferences may vary dramatically, their family physician works to understand these needs and preferences as essential to the healing relationship. Deception on the part of a physician is antithetical to his or her relationship with the patient, a relationship predicated on the ability of the physician to communicate information about the patient’s health issues in a manner he or she can trust, accept and understand.

Don’t hesitate to contact us if you’d like to speak with a staff member or family physician about the study.

The Pennsylvania Academy of Family Physicians and its Foundation supports its members (including nearly 80 percent of Pennsylvania family physicians) through advocacy and education to ensure a patient-centered medical home for every Pennsylvanian. The Academy and its Foundation are the leading influential resource among family physicians and physicians in training in Pennsylvania; the primary voice on health care issues with state legislative and administrative branches of government, media and professional health organizations; and the leader on health care issues in the community.

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