



Explanatory Models of Illness

The following questions can be used to explore a patient's explanatory model – their ideas about the nature of their problem, its cause, severity, prognosis and treatment preferences.¹

- 1.** What do you call the problem?
- 2.** What do you think has caused the problem?
- 3.** Why do you think it started when it did?
- 4.** What do you think the sickness does? How does it work?
- 5.** How severe is the sickness? Will it have a short or long course?
- 6.** What kind of treatment do you think you should receive?
- 7.** What are the chief problems the sickness has caused?
- 8.** What do you fear most about the sickness?

¹ Kleinman A., Eisenberg L., Good B. (1978) Culture, illness, and care: clinical lessons from anthropological and cross-cultural research. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 88, 251–288.