

**Case study:**

# **A personal view of the shared decision making process and its importance to patients**

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‘For shared decision making to work in practice, there has to be genuine “buy-in” from the clinician, and not just token support for the idea. I don’t think you can learn this. Rather it’s a belief in what shared decision making is and why you want to do it. We talk a lot about empowering the patient, but really the patient needs to see that the clinician understands and values what they want. This is the key thing and once you have it, then even if the process is a little shaky, everything else will follow naturally and it will still work.

‘In terms of sharing information, clinicians want to improve the patient’s knowledge but it’s also important not to over-burden them with too much at once. Clinicians need to pitch the information at the right level. Some patients will be incredibly well-informed and will have been researching their condition, while others may not even have heard of their illness before.

‘Timing is also crucial. For some patients, once they have been given their initial diagnosis, they can take nothing else in. As their clinician, you may feel that you’re giving them all the detailed information they need - but actually you need to check whether they have heard and understood what you’ve said.

‘Patients can help the process and get the best out of shared decision making by being prepared, thinking ahead about what they want to say and the questions they might want to ask. But clinicians also need to remember that although evidence demonstrates that once a good shared decision making conversation has been initiated, patients usually do want to be involved, there will be some patients who, for whatever reason, just don’t want to make a decision about their treatment. As long as everything has been done to ensure that they can be as involved in decision-making as they choose to be, and the clinician has gained a good understanding of the patient’s values during the conversation, then we must accept that this is also their decision.’