Jared Magnani is an Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh’s Heart and Vascular Institute. His research focuses on identifying social determinants of health and their relation to cardiovascular disease, and he was recently awarded two large NIH grants to test the effectiveness of a smartphone app he developed to improve medical care for people with atrial fibrillation (AF).

Below is a preview of our interview with Dr. Magnani, and click HERE to learn more about his work!

CBHST: How do you try to improve the experiences of patients with low health literacy?
There are several strategies that have been validated and that we can incorporate right in our clinics. It’s very important to use short sentences, the teach-back method, and as little jargon as possible. When I meet with a patient and talk to them about heart disease, I also try to remember to ask them if they have questions. If somebody tells me that they can’t think of any questions, it could very well be a signal that they don’t know how to ask a question or that they don’t know what to ask because they’re feeling overwhelmed. At that point, I usually acknowledge that the information they just received can be a lot for them to take in and ask them how they’re feeling about it. This allows me as a clinician to begin to understand the patient’s experience of the disease and to learn how to break it down a little bit better for the patient. I think that the overall goal when speaking to a patient, regardless of health literacy level, is to make it a collaboration. The patient brings expertise to the encounter – be it about their symptoms or their lives – that the physician cannot inherently know.

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