

Do you have an efficient "script" or way of responding to a patient request (also called a "Spiel") regarding use of an alternative therapy for which there is no information supporting efficacy? If so, what is it?

"I specifically tell them not to use a particular agent and document that recommendation in the medical record. If a patient asks about a specific product that I am not familiar with, my standard response is "USE AT YOUR OWN RISK" - I will not prescribe or endorse the use of any product (pharmaceutical or alternative) unless I feel capable of managing ill effects from the agent. I encourage patient self education about products prior to their use if they are intent on using a particular agent. I also specifically educate patients that naturopathic agents come with risks and side effects as do pharmaceuticals - including the side effect to their pocket book. And lastly, I emphasize that there is no regulatory agency such as the FDA that monitors safety, efficacy, tolerability, or the authenticity of these agents."

"If you don't mind being your own guinea pig..."

"Just because something is 'natural' doesn't mean it is safe. Some 'natural' substances are harmful (like some mushrooms)."

"Before taking a medicine, I'd like some evidence that it is both safe and effective..."

"While I'm not outright against the use of herbal remedies, there are two reasons I cannot recommend them. The first is many of them have not been studied, so I cannot tell you what side effects or interactions this substance may have. The second is they are not regulated, which means that in many cases, you really don't know exactly what is in them. I ask that you be cautious when taking over the counter remedies."

"If it is for symptom control or treating a chronic illness for which there is no evidence-based way to treat, I say 'We don't know if that alternative treatment works for this, but since there is nothing else proven to work it may be worth a try if you desire.' If it is for an illness with evidence-based treatment available, I say 'You're free to try alternative treatment if you'd like, but there is/are treatments that we know are effective, and I recommend you consider it/them. Perhaps you'd like to use the alternative treatment as an adjunct to proven treatment.'"