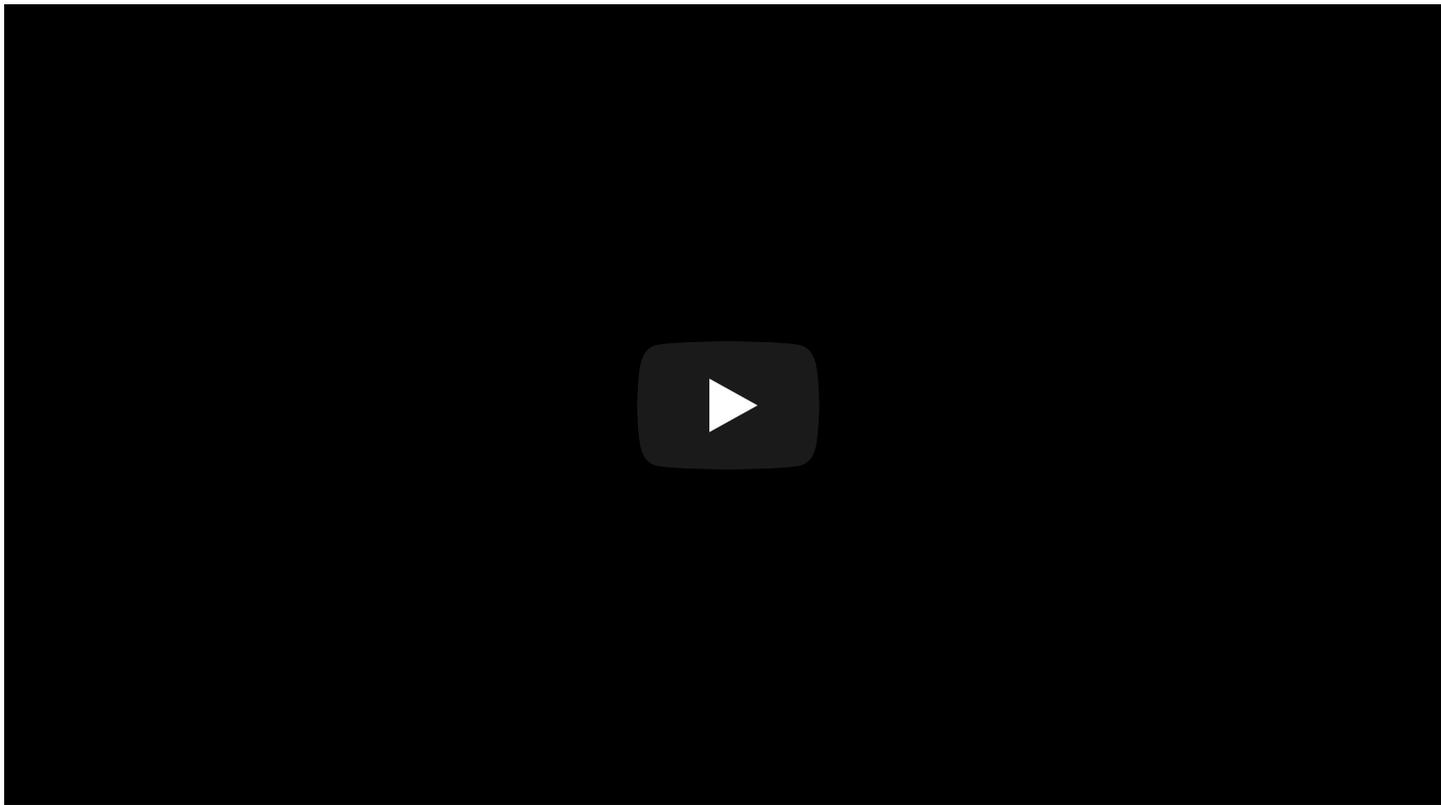


Doctor's dilemma

Submitted by Kellie Mundell on Wed, 2015-04-22 08:41

Many people are scared of the dentist but some studies suggest we should be more afraid of the doctor!

My colleague Andrew Sharman has given an excellent talk (below) on the nature of fear (illustrated with footage of him swimming with great white sharks) and how it can have a negative impact on our daily lives.



In the example I'd like to explore here, the three-way fear dynamic between patients, doctors and lawyers often causes *far* more harm than good. While doctors not being able to behave incompetently with impunity is a good thing — in truth very few are incompetent or uncaring. It's yet another area where blame almost certainly causes a whole raft of unintended consequences.

The problem is that many doctors have got into the habit of automatically erring on the side of caution. They prescribe drugs that don't really need to be taken, reducing their effectiveness overall as immunity increases; and operations are routinely advised that are borderline calls. With thousands dying from hospital infections and complications unrelated to the initial problem, you really don't want to go to hospital if you can possibly avoid it.

In short, to make sure nothing legal can come back to bite them many doctors act with caution on a daily basis, thereby causing more problems for the general population in the long run.



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So, a top tip when consulting a doctor is to ask what they advise and then what they would advise a member of their own family. Research suggests they'll be surprisingly frank and that the response can often be *very* different to the advice they gave you. Data show those "borderline" operations are undertaken on medics' families far less often than on the general population.

A challenge: Is there anywhere in your organisation where the habit of knee jerk over caution has become ingrained to its long term advantage?

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