



5 Questions to Ask Before Seeing a New Practitioner

For many of us, it takes time to decide to seek treatment for what ails us. We often wait for the issue to get better on its own. We live with discomfort or pain for too long before we decide we've had enough and need the help of a practitioner to resolve the issue. By then, we want treatment immediately and can be tempted to jump at the first chance to see a practitioner. This can be risky. Finding the right practitioner takes time and due diligence. It may mean the wait to get an appointment is a bit longer but it also increases the chance of finding the right qualifications and fit.

Below are five questions to ask a practitioner before making the decision to work with him or her.

Are You Certified?

Practitioner certification (or licensing) means that the practitioner has earned the necessary qualifications to practice in his or her field. Working with a certified practitioner provides peace of mind in knowing that the practitioner has achieved an education in his or her field, passed the necessary testing, and is in good standing with their association. **Many associations offer a directory of licensed practitioners that allows people to check the status of a practitioner for themselves.** If a practitioner isn't in good standing with his or her association, look elsewhere.



What Is the Pricing Model?

It's standard practice for practitioners to charge an hourly or service-based rate. **What isn't standard practice is for a practitioner to contractually obligate clients to a service schedule and an expensive payment plan.** This is sometimes seen in the chiropractic world. If a practitioner suggests that the pricing model is there to ensure full recovery and/or guaranteed service, this is a warning sign. It isn't possible for any practitioner to predict how long recovery will take and it certainly isn't appropriate for a practitioner to suggest thousands of dollars of treatments up front. Also, if a practitioner doesn't accept new clients until they've signed a contract, you might want to consider walking away. **Ensure the practitioner takes an ethical, client-centric approach to treatment.**

What Is a Typical Treatment Plan?

This is a trick question. A practitioner should never have a one-size-fits-all treatment plan. Each client has unique needs and therefore requires a unique treatment plan.

While there may be similarities between clients, ***a practitioner should never presume to know the correct course of treatment until a thorough assessment has been completed.*** A good practitioner will also work with you to develop the course of treatment that is right for your needs and budget.

Do You Issue Receipts?

Receipts are important for insurance and tax purposes. The ability for a practitioner to issue receipts also ensures that he or she is a certified member in good standing with his or her association. ***If a practitioner is unable to issue receipts for services, you won't be able to get reimbursed by your insurance company.***

Where Do Treatments Take Place

We often presume that a practitioner will have a dedicated space for treatments, but that isn't always the case. For instance, some physiotherapists practice in an area shared with other practitioners and clients. Acupuncturists sometimes treat clients in a common room. This allows him or her to book more clients in a day and make monitoring clients easier. While treatments given outside of an office environment can be unwelcome, the same doesn't hold true for practitioners such as counsellors. Depending on the circumstances, ***a counsellor may find it helpful to play a board game or conduct the appointment outside to put the client – especially children – at ease. A good counsellor will adapt to create an environment that allows the client to feel at ease.***

An ethical practitioner will never hesitate to answer these questions. If you are made to feel awkward about inquiring about qualifications and approach to treatment, that's a bad sign.

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