

Supplementary Table 1. Themes, subthemes, and quotations

Theme	Subthemes	Quotations
1: Equipping themselves with knowledge	1.1: Seeking relevant information online	<p>“I searched online to understand what is going and check the details of the rehabilitation; then, I went to the clinic confirming the cause with the doctor and tried rehabilitation for a while.” (F)</p> <p>“Before my visit, I always search online to find which specialist I should see...I also search for information about treatment and then confirm what I find with my doctor. I also search for information to understand my treatment after my doctor told me what to do next.” (R)</p>
	1.2: Asking or discussing with family and friends	<p>“My sister had a bad experience with this treatment. She was in bed for 10 days after the treatment, and she sent me pictures of her leg, which really scared me. So, I am afraid of receiving this treatment.” (B)</p> <p>“My friend’s nephew said that the operation might not go well, so I should try to postpone it if possible.” (E)</p>
	1.3: Learning from their own	<p>“I had a knee operation last year and received injections and physical therapy for a long time, so I am familiar with</p>

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experiences all the procedures.” (L)

“I have tried everything except surgery in the past 6 years,  
so I know about all the options my doctor mentioned.” (O)

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1.4: Learning “If the doctors could give me a health education booklet,  
from even if it contained only two items related to my condition,  
professionals I would read the entire booklet and have a clearer idea of  
and experts my condition.” (E)

“I’m very appreciative of doctors who give me their official  
or private Line account or link me to their Facebook Group  
pages managed by their team, to answer the questions of  
patients and their families.” (T)

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2: Shared or 2.1: Speaking “I’ve been visiting two doctors for a long time. Both are  
not shared with authority very famous and have many patients. They always speak  
fluently and authoritatively such that you have no way to  
interrupt or ask questions.” (D)

“The orthopedist recommended knee replacement surgery.  
He told my daughter and me that it is a simple procedure  
and that I only need to wear a knee brace for 2 weeks after  
the surgery. He didn’t give more details or share

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precautions regarding the surgery.” (E)

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2.2: Discussing “My rehabilitation physician gave me many options. He

multiple asked me which of them I would prefer to try first. I

treatment thought I could start with painkillers. The physician said he

options with would prescribe medication for 2 weeks, and that we would

patients then discuss subsequent treatment during my next visit.”

(B)

“My orthopedist, Dr. Wu, was very patient and enthusiastic.

He not only prescribed me a painkiller but also

[encouraged] me to visit a physiatrist for physical therapy

and a traditional Chinese physician for acupuncture if I

didn’t plan to have the surgery. In addition, he taught me

how to exercise himself. Seldom, physicians provide these

things to patients.” (I)

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2.3: Respecting “I told the doctor I would like to try a long-acting injection

patient on my knee. He said I could have the injection, but I had to

preferences pay for it by myself.” (A)

“I asked my rehabilitation physician to arrange some

machine traction for my back and to refer me to the

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Department of Traditional Medicine for acupuncture, and she agreed.” (R)

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2.4: “I asked questions when I didn’t understand something my Responding in doctor mentioned. The doctor explained it to me again, but a perfunctory he did not ask whether I understood.” (B)

manner “The doctor didn’t respect me. He did not really want to discuss the treatment options with me; he just provided me hints regarding what he wanted to do.” (J)

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3: Seldom 3.1: Respecting “I seek treatment because I trust the professionalism of my saying no to physicians’ doctor and respect his clinical skills. I understand my physician- professionalis doctor’s interpretation of my medical condition and trust prescribed m his diagnosis and mostly accept his professional advice.” treatment plans (H)

during visits “As a patient, you must respect your doctor’s profession... You have to listen to your doctor’s recommendations; yes, to obey and comply with his prescriptions.” (S)

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3.2: Rejecting “I would respond to my doctor’s recommendation after a physician- couple of days; I might tell the doctor that I have to think

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prescribed about it and then discuss it with my family.” (A)

treatment plans “The orthopedist suggested that I should take pain pills; I

indirectly agreed in the clinic but did not take the medicine the doctor prescribed to me. In addition, I continued to refill the doctor’s prescription for pain pills still every 3 months because I thought I would feel embarrassed if I did not return for the appointment according to the doctor’s scheduled.” (K)

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3.3: “I first listened to my orthopedist and received several

Responding injections for the knee but in vain; then, I accepted my

depends on orthopedist’s suggestion of surgery to reassemble my knee

how it goes with a new set of components. However, I did not expect suffer from persistent postoperative soreness and numbness, which disturb my outdoor activity and made me weak thereafter. Although this was not a satisfying surgery, I understood it was not my orthopedist’s fault. So, I turned to receiving rehabilitation.” (M)

“I had job rotation across cities and countries; I couldn’t help but comply with different doctors’ orders and

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therapists' instructions at that time to relieve my pain." (O)

"The orthopedist suggested to arrange surgery. I agreed, and he scheduled surgery in 2 months. So, I went to see a rehabilitation physician, a Chinese medicine specialist, and a physical therapist during those 2 months; then, I decided to not undergo surgery." (F)

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4: Whose call? 4.1: Making decisions on their own "My doctor said that I have to rehab every day, but I didn't have time. Another physician told me to take medicine I didn't accept because I used to have a stomachache. Finally, I agreed with the other doctor's recommendation to get an injection immediately at clinic because I thought it worked." (C)

"To accept or reject a surgery recommendation is a personal choice. If I believe it's helpful, I accept the treatment options my doctor offered. Yes, that's my philosophy." (M)

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4.2: Discussing with family "If the treatment involves a surgical procedure, I discuss it with my family. So, my husband accompanied me to visit his classmate, a very reputable orthopedist. My husband

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also persuaded me to receive knee replacement surgery because he knew that I like to travel and that my stamina will become poorer as I get older.” (L)

“My son told me to not undergo surgery, and I agreed with him because I need my children for their financial support for surgery and their care during hospitalization.” (N)

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4.3: Obeying physician’s recommendations

“I didn’t understand my condition completely based on how the doctor explained it to me. I don’t need to clearly know the details of illness; that’s the doctors’ business. The most important thing I need to know is the way to cure my disease; the doctor told me to undergo lumbar traction; thus, I did.” (G)

“Because the doctor asked me to respond to his suggestion, I had no choice but to promise him this: yes, I will.” (J)

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