

The Myth of Average

Why Individual Patient Differences Matter

Health care is often designed with the “average” patient in mind.
But in the real world, each person is unique.

If health care policies and research are designed assuming the average patient looks like this:



Then these policies and research findings may not translate well for patients who look like this:



Individual Treatment Differences Matter

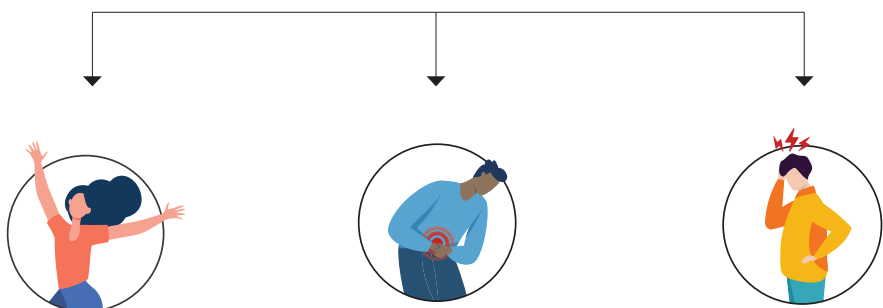
Many factors can affect how a patient will respond to treatment, including:



Because different patients can have different treatment responses, the treatment that’s best for most patients may not be the one that’s right for a specific individual.



For example: Aspirin is commonly used to treat headaches.



For some people, it works well and without side effects.

For other people, it cures the headache but causes stomach upset.

For certain people, it doesn’t cause an upset stomach, but it also doesn’t stop the headache.

Navigating Health Care: Acknowledging Individual Patient Differences

Patients, caregivers and health care providers should discuss the potential impact of individual patient differences when determining the best treatment strategy.

Questions for a Patient-Provider Conversation

- What treatment options are available, and what are the potential benefits and risks?
- What side effects could the patient experience with each treatment option?
- Could any of the patient’s personal characteristics or preferences impact their response to the treatments?
- Has there been any research into treatment responses in patients with the same condition and similar personal characteristics?
- If the patient doesn't respond, what are the next treatment steps? Will their health insurance cover other options?



Denied for Being Different: Patient Differences and Health Benefits

Most health plans still design their policies to meet the needs of the “average” patient. But this can create access and affordability challenges for many individuals.

How Can Insurers Make Insurance Benefit Design More Patient-Centered?



1. Align patient cost sharing with clinically appropriate care:
 - ▶ Offer variable or dynamic patient cost sharing
 - ▶ Provide pre-deductible coverage for high-value medicines
2. Implement more equitable benefit design
3. Follow best practices for step therapy requirements

Want to Learn More?

Read the National Pharmaceutical Council’s “[The Myth of Average](#)” booklet for additional information on individual treatment effects and the ways we can improve health care decision-making and reform insurance benefit design to ensure patients can access the health care that’s right for them. Visit npcnow.org.

