

# Communicating diagnostic uncertainty in emergency care



## What patients and caregivers want:

- ⊕ *Open, action-oriented, patient-centred* communication about diagnostic uncertainty.

## Why it matters:

- ⊕ Supports patients and caregivers to *understand, assess and engage in* the diagnostic process.

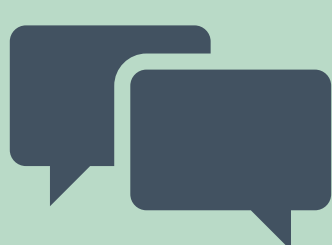
### STUDY DETAILS



2 Australian emergency departments



Patients n=24  
Headache, dizziness, abdominal pain or chest pain.  
Mid to low acuity (triage 3/4/5)  
Caregivers n=11



Interviews  
At the bedside or in the waiting room before seeing a doctor.



Thematic and content analysis  
Supported by consumers and ED specialists.

Patients and caregivers **trust doctors** when they:

- ⊕ take their concerns seriously
- ⊕ are honest about uncertainty
- ⊕ explain their diagnostic thinking
- ⊕ provide a clear path forward.



Patients and caregivers **feel reassured** when doctors show they can navigate uncertainty, not when they downplay it.

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