

Truth & Trust in Medicine

Building better health through trust, partnership & prevention · Executive Summary

Medicine has never had better tools — and yet outcomes still lag, because the tools only work if someone uses them. Whether a person fills the prescription, returns for follow-up, or mentions the symptom they are embarrassed about depends on one variable: **trust**. It behaves like a clinical variable. It can be built, measured, and eroded — and in American medicine it is being eroded by design rather than by intent.

26.7

hours per day needed to deliver all guideline-recommended primary care to an average panel.

Porter et al., JGIM, 2023

~5

minutes spent on the most important topic in a typical visit covering roughly six topics.

Tai-Seale et al., HSR, 2007

Last

U.S. rank on health system performance among ten high-income nations, at the highest cost.

Commonwealth Fund, Mirror, Mirror

A BETTER WAY FORWARD

- **Prevention.** Move upstream, where medicine has leverage.
- **Partnership.** Replace paternalism with a working alliance.
- **Education.** *Docēre* — the root of *doctor* is to teach.
- **Communication.** Culturally competent, socioeconomically honest.
- **Long-term relationship.** Continuity compounds.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

- ✓ Ask questions until the answer makes sense.
- ✓ Find a clinician you can be honest with.
- ✓ Build the relationship before you need it.
- ✓ Focus on prevention — sleep, movement, food, stress, screening.
- ✓ Participate in the decision, don't just receive it.

Three levers, pulled together. **The Clinician** — listen, teach, return. **The Individual** — prepare, ask, stay. **The System** — pay for outcomes, protect time, build a workforce that reflects the country. Pull one and the other two pull it back.

Read the evidence carefully. A randomized study in Oakland found Black men agreed to significantly more preventive screening when seen by a Black physician. The widely quoted cardiovascular mortality figure is the authors' **modeled projection** of that effect at scale — not a measured outcome. (Alsan, Garrick & Graziani, *American Economic Review*, 2019)