

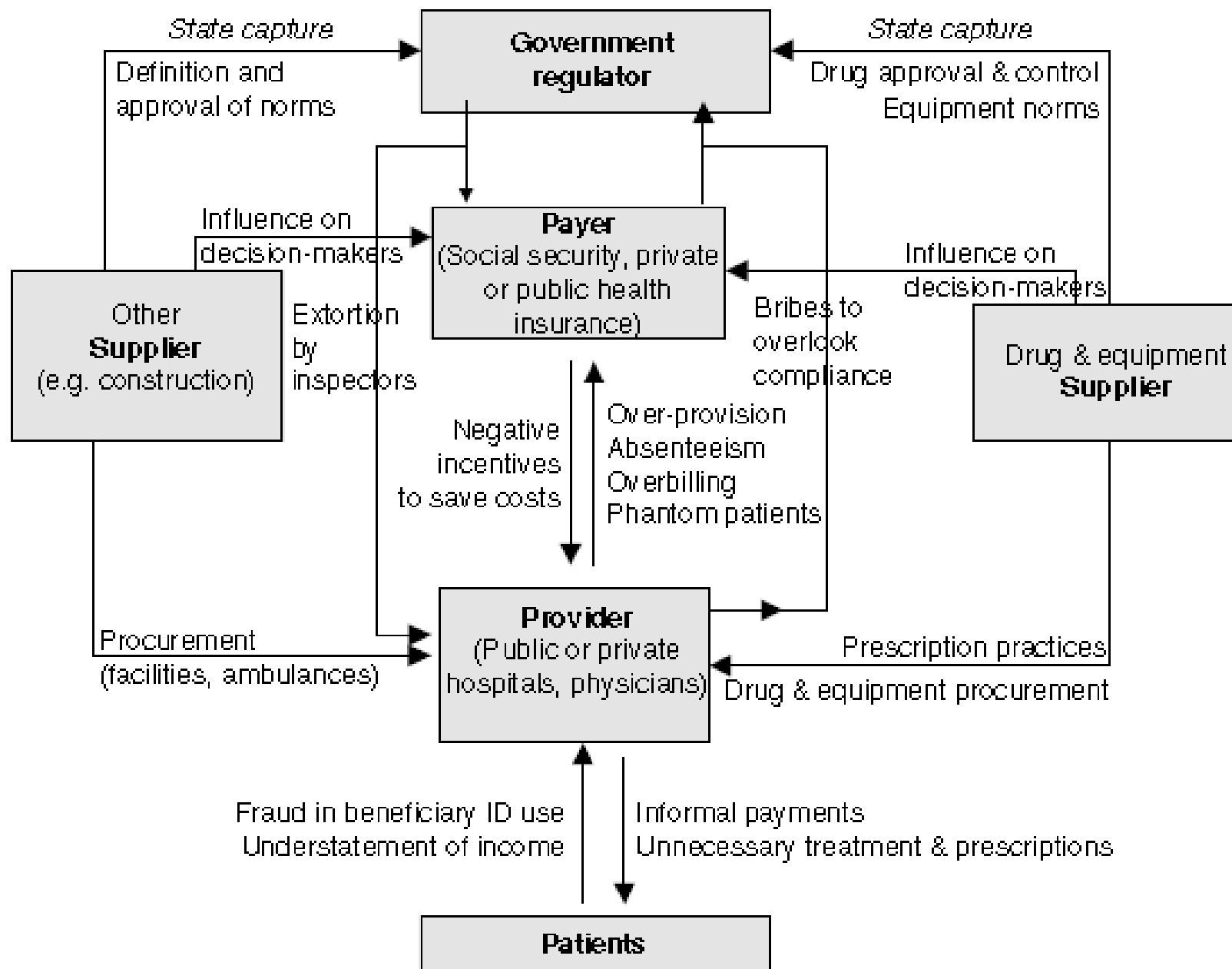
Physician's profession in a social and cultural perspective

Models of physician-patient relationship

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Organisational challenges of healthcare

- multiple organisational and agency issues
- complicated division of work
- state interference
- risks of corruption
- technology involvement



Analysis of physician/patient relationships in sociology

- social roles (role of a physician, role of a patient)
- dominance and associated professionalization of the doctor as an expert
- global social changes (prevention of asymmetry in doctor/patient relationships)

Social roles of physician and patient

Sick Role (Talcott Parsons)

- the theory was developed in 1950s
- functionalism – a theory analysing function of social practices in maintaining social order and structure
- Freud's theory of psychoanalysis (relationships between parents and children)
- Max Weber's works on authority
 - How does a sick person interact with the social system?
 - Is disease a state or a social role?

Sick Role (Parsons)

- Society applies 'rules' to ill people
- The sick person and the society both have obligations
 - **sick person («ideal patient»):** to seek appropriate medical help and to want to get better
 - **society:** to excuse the sick person from normal social roles, to not hold the patient responsible for their condition and for the sick person to be taken care of

Medicine as a form of social control

- social role - expected behaviour of a person of certain status (including rights and obligations)
- medical practice as a secular form of social control that substitutes ritual forms of reintegration in case of social deviance

Sick Role (Parsons)

- the patient is released from his/her daily responsibilities, depending on the duration, severity and nature of his/her illness
 - the exemption must be legitimised by the doctor, i.e. based on expert knowledge
 - this process protects the social system from abuse
 - as opposed to criminal deeds, the patient is not responsible for his condition
- passivity and dependence on doctor's decisions

Physician's role (Parsons)

- guided by rules of professional practice
 - use of high-level knowledge and skills
 - legitimisation of the disease and treatment
 - professional obligation – to act in the best interest of the patient and to maintain professional distance
 - gets access to the patient's body, biography and trust
- professional dominance and autonomy

Max Weber: types of authority

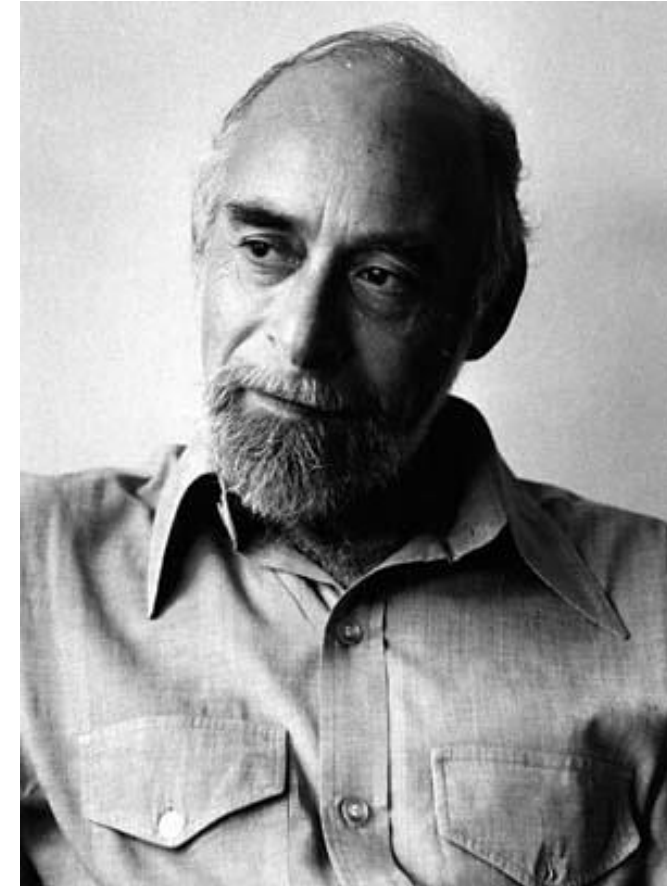
Weber writes about 3 types of authority:

- charismatic
 - traditional
 - rational/legal
- An individual doctor may possess all 3 types of authority, but the profession is based on legal authority
 - Abuse of authority may lead to the transformation of the disease into stigmatised forms (madness & badness)

Medicine as a profession

Eliot Freidson (1923-2005)

- "Profession of Medicine" (1970)
- "Doctoring Together: A Study of Professional Social Control" (1976)
- "Professional Powers" (1986)
- "Medical Work in America" (1989)
- "Professionalism, the Third Logic" (2001)



Characteristics of a professional action (Freidson)

The action is:

- based on specialised, high level and systematically improved knowledge
- subject to regulatory collegial control – the group has the right to train, discipline and exclude colleagues
- based on compliance with codes of ethics
- includes specific obligations and liability to society

What is profession?

- The words "profession" and "professional" come from the Latin word "professio," which means a public declaration with the force of a promise
- The profession presents itself to society as a social benefit and society accepts the profession, expecting it to serve some important social goal

What is profession?

The marks of a profession are:

- competence in a specialized body of knowledge and skill
- an acknowledgment of specific duties and responsibilities toward the individuals it serves and toward society
- the right to train, admit, discipline and dismiss its members for failure to sustain competence or observe the duties and responsibilities

Professional power of a doctor

- right to diagnose disease
- right to perform treatment
- right to prescribe and carry out treatments, in particular to prescribe medicines

External symbols of professional status



- white coat
- phonendoscope
- Hipocratic oath
- ...

Study in the intensive-therapy department in the U.K.

What clothing is suitable for a doctor?

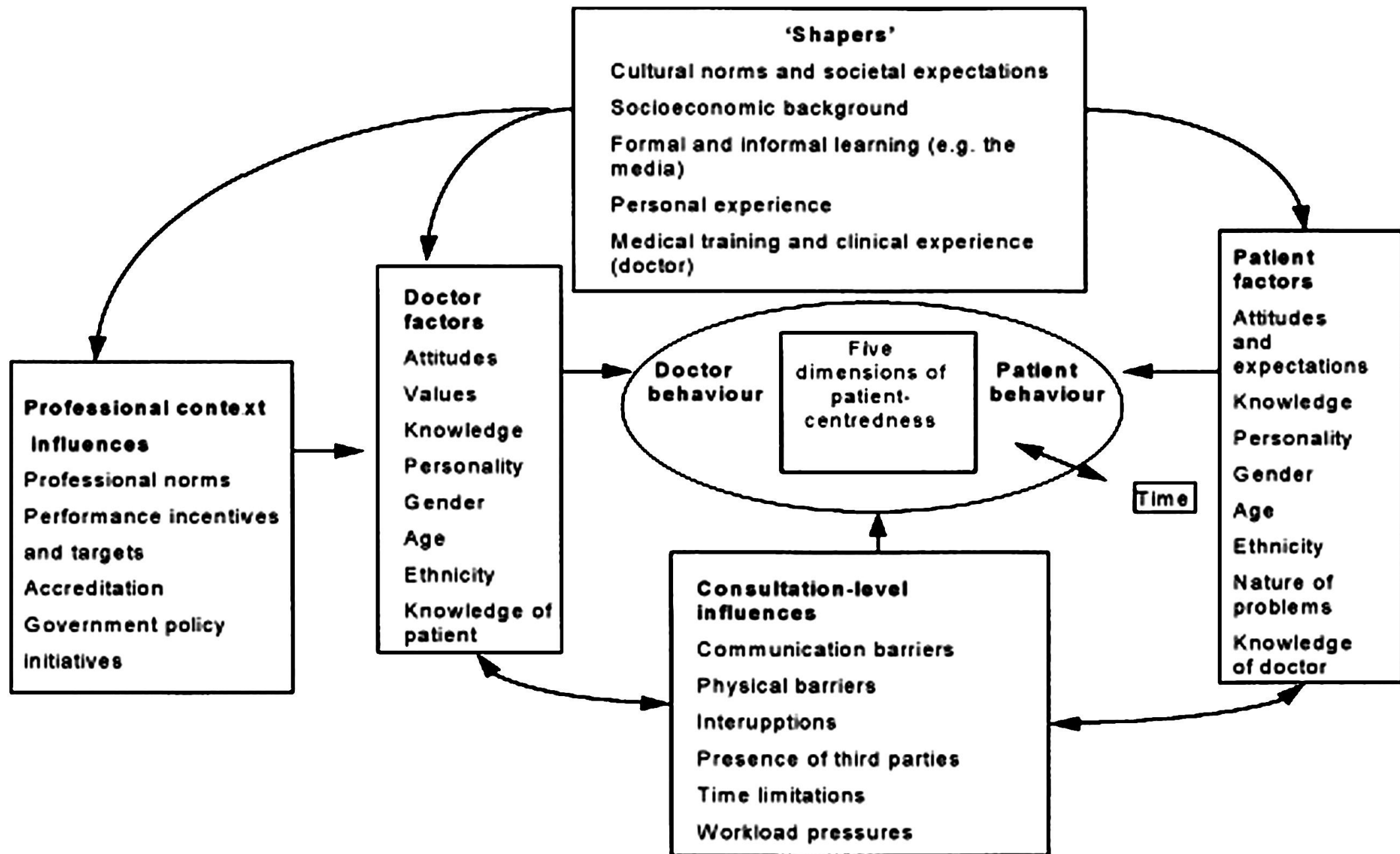
- white coat – 52%
- coat – 24%
- suit — 13%
- everyday clothing -11%
- 30% found piercings and tattoos unacceptable
- Appearance was an even more important indicator than age, which traditionally demonstrates experience

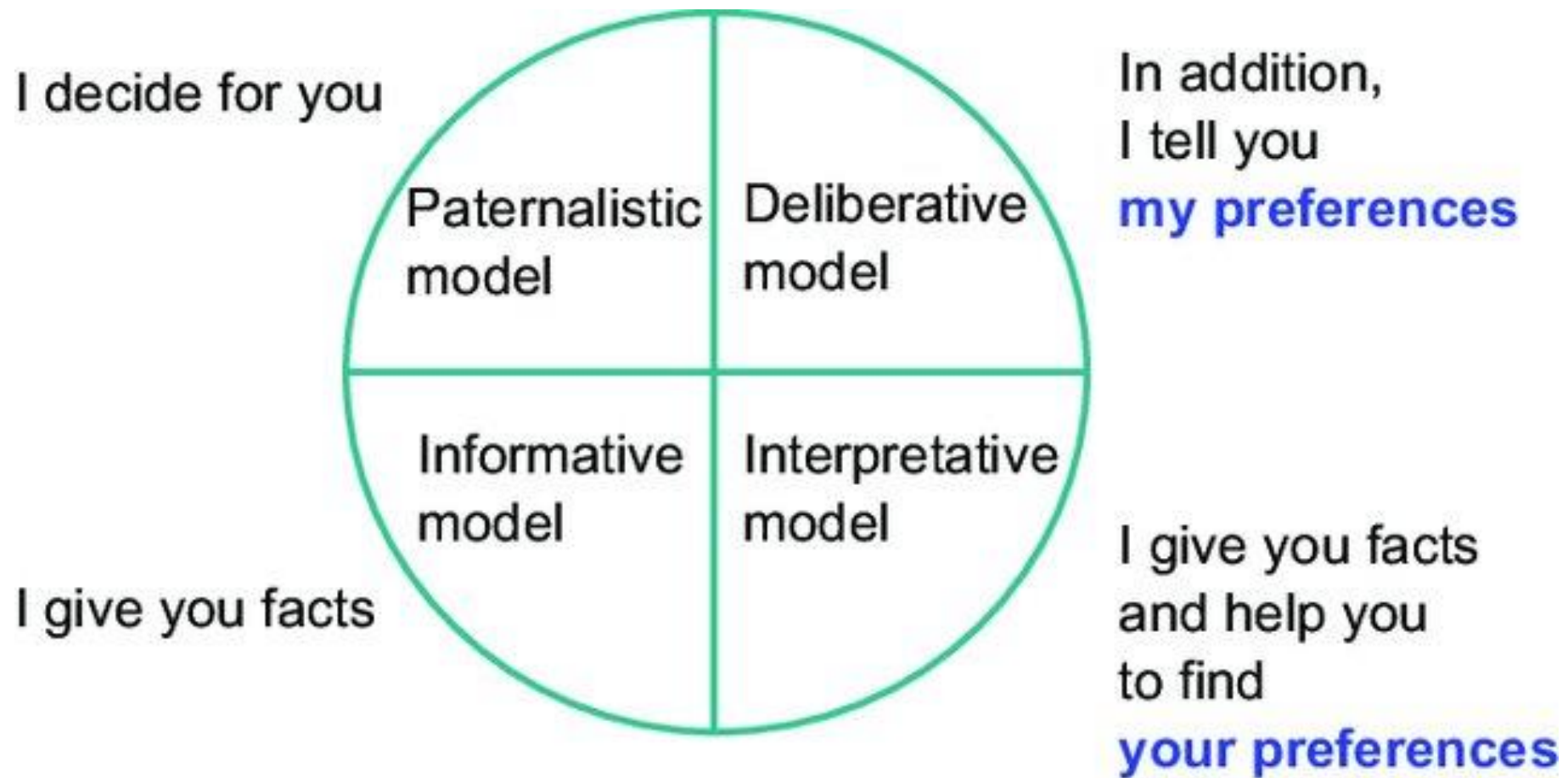
“Doctors clowns”

- reducing fears
- distance reduction



Models of physician/patient relationships





Respect for autonomy

- Autonomy is the ability of a person to direct his/her activities
- Moral obligation to respect the choices of competent persons
- The practical translation (rule) of this principle is: to obtain informed consent

Paternalism

- Only doctors are competent to know the best clinical choice
- The culture of paternalism tends to exclude patients by limiting information and discouraging them from asking questions

The asymmetry of the physician/patient relationship is determined by:

- different knowledge distribution
- different availability of information
- different options for action

Susan DiGiacomo

- anthropologist, cancer survivor
- sought to actively participate in treatment and to take control
- was met with surprise, conflict and lack of acceptance



Doctor-patient communication

Studies: effective doctor-patient communication can improve patient health as well as medicines

