# PERSUASION AND RECOMMENDATION STRATEGIES IN MEDICAL DISCOURSE: PSYCHOLINGUISTIC, PRAGMATIC AND COMMUNICATIVE ASPECTS

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**Abstract**

This study examines persuasion and recommendation as significant cognitive-pragmatic strategies in medical discourse, focusing on their linguistic realization, communicative functions, and potential effects on doctor–patient interaction. Medical discourse represents a complex form of institutional communication in which linguistic choices are closely associated with professional authority, psychological factors, patients' cognitive processes, and healthcare-related decision-making. Within this framework, persuasion and recommendation serve as important mechanisms through which medical professionals influence patients' perceptions, attitudes, and treatment-related decisions. The study explores the lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and discourse-level resources employed to implement these strategies in English-language medical communication. Particular attention is paid to modal expressions, directive speech acts, evaluative vocabulary, conditional constructions, evidential arguments, and expressions of professional advice. The analysis demonstrates that appropriately employed persuasive and recommendatory strategies can facilitate treatment adherence, strengthen interpersonal trust, reduce uncertainty, and promote patient participation in healthcare decisions. However, excessive persuasion, authoritative recommendations, and insufficient consideration of patients' preferences may result in communicative pressure, reduced autonomy, misunderstanding, and distrust. The study therefore emphasizes the importance of balancing professional expertise with patient-centred communication.

**Keywords:** medical discourse, persuasion strategy, recommendation strategy, psycholinguistics, cognitive pragmatics, doctor–patient communication, linguistic influence, patient autonomy, treatment adherence.

Medical discourse is a specialized form of institutional communication characterized by the interaction of linguistic, cognitive, psychological, and sociocultural factors. Its primary purpose extends beyond the transmission of medical information, encompassing the establishment of professional relationships, the interpretation of health-related problems, and the negotiation of appropriate treatment decisions. In doctor–patient communication, language functions not only as an informational instrument but also as a means of influencing patients' cognitive and behavioural responses.Among the principal communicative strategies employed in medical discourse, persuasion and recommendation occupy a particularly important position. These strategies enable healthcare professionals to explain the necessity of medical interventions, encourage preventive behaviour, promote adherence to treatment, and guide patients towards informed healthcare decisions.Persuasion refers to a communicative process through which a speaker attempts to influence another person's beliefs, attitudes, or intentions by presenting arguments, explanations, and emotionally or cognitively significant information. Recommendation, in contrast, involves expressing professional judgement and proposing a particular course of action based on medical knowledge and an assessment of the patient's condition.Although these strategies are closely interconnected, they are not identical. Recommendation primarily communicates professional advice, whereas persuasion involves a more explicit attempt to influence the patient's acceptance of a particular position or course of action. Their distinction is particularly important in medical communication because


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the physician's institutional authority may significantly affect the patient's interpretation of linguistic expressions.

The study employs a qualitative analytical approach based on the examination of theoretical and empirical research concerning medical discourse, doctor–patient interaction, persuasive communication, and shared decision-making.The principal research methods include discourse analysis, pragmatic analysis, contextual analysis, and psycholinguistic interpretation. These methods make it possible to identify the communicative intentions underlying persuasive and recommendatory expressions and to examine their potential cognitive and behavioural effects.

The linguistic analysis focuses on several categories of communicative resources:

1. **Modal expressions:** should, ought to, need to, must, may.
2. **Recommendation formulas:** I recommend, I would advise, it would be better to, you may benefit from.
3. **Persuasive expressions:** it is important to understand, this treatment can help, the evidence suggests.
4. **Conditional constructions:** if you follow the recommended treatment, you may experience improvement.
5. **Explanatory and evidential structures:** clinical evidence indicates, research suggests, based on your medical condition.

These linguistic resources are considered in relation to their pragmatic functions, degree of directness, professional authority, and potential influence on patient interpretation.

**1. Linguistic and pragmatic realization of persuasion in medical discourse**

Persuasion is an essential component of medical communication because patients frequently need professional explanations before accepting particular diagnostic procedures, preventive measures, or therapeutic interventions. In English-language medical discourse, persuasion is commonly realized through rational argumentation, evidence-based explanations, positive evaluation, and expressions emphasizing the importance of specific health-related actions.

For example:

*"It is important to complete the prescribed treatment because discontinuing it prematurely may affect your recovery."*

In this example, the expression *"It is important"* performs an evaluative and persuasive function, while the subordinate clause provides a rational justification for the recommended behaviour. The physician does not merely issue an instruction but establishes a logical relationship between the proposed action and its potential consequences.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, such expressions activate the patient's processes of information interpretation, risk assessment, and decision-making. The effectiveness of persuasion depends not only on the lexical meaning of individual expressions but also on the patient's previous experience, emotional condition, health literacy, and level of trust in the medical professional.

Persuasion may also be implemented through reassurance and empathetic communication:

*"I understand your concerns. Let me explain why this treatment may be beneficial for you."*

This construction combines emotional recognition with rational explanation. The initial statement acknowledges the patient's psychological state, whereas the subsequent sentence introduces a medically grounded argument. Such a communicative sequence may reduce uncertainty and facilitate constructive dialogue.


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**2. Recommendation as a cognitive-pragmatic strategy**

Recommendation represents another significant strategy in medical discourse. It reflects the physician's professional assessment and provides the patient with guidance concerning appropriate healthcare behaviour.

In English medical communication, recommendations may be expressed through different degrees of directness:

- Direct recommendation: *"You should take this medication as prescribed."*
- Professional advice: *"I would recommend regular follow-up examinations."*
- Softened recommendation: *"You may wish to consider this treatment option."*
- Collaborative recommendation: *"We could discuss which treatment option would be most suitable for you."*

These constructions demonstrate that recommendation is not limited to imperative sentences. It can also be realized through modal verbs, conditional structures, interrogative forms, and expressions of professional opinion.

The choice of a particular linguistic form depends on the communicative situation, the seriousness of the medical condition, the patient's preferences, and the relationship between the participants.

From a pragmatic perspective, softened recommendations can reduce the perceived force of professional authority and create opportunities for patient participation. Collaborative formulations, in particular, contribute to the development of partnership-based communication.

For instance:

*"We can consider several treatment options and choose the one that best corresponds to your needs."*

This expression presents the treatment process as a cooperative activity rather than a unilateral decision made exclusively by the physician.

**3. Positive communicative outcomes of persuasion and recommendation**

The appropriate use of persuasion and recommendation strategies can produce several positive effects in medical discourse.

First, they contribute to improved treatment adherence. When physicians provide understandable explanations and justify their recommendations with relevant medical evidence, patients may develop a clearer understanding of the importance of prescribed treatment.

Second, these strategies strengthen doctor–patient trust. Empathetic language, transparent explanations, and respectful recommendations contribute to a supportive communicative environment.

Third, persuasion and recommendation may reduce patients' uncertainty and anxiety by providing structured information about medical conditions and available treatment options.Fourth, these strategies facilitate preventive healthcare behaviour. Through appropriate explanations and recommendations, medical professionals can encourage patients to participate in health screenings, follow preventive measures, and adopt medically appropriate lifestyle practices.Research on motivational interviewing also demonstrates the potential effectiveness of collaborative communication in supporting behavioural change. A systematic review and meta-analysis by Lundahl et al. (2013), which included 48 studies and 9,618 participants, identified a statistically significant, modest advantage for motivational interviewing in medical care settings.Thus, the positive effects of persuasion and recommendation are closely associated with the use of evidence-based arguments, understandable language, empathy, and respect for individual patient preference.


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Despite their positive functions, persuasion and recommendation may also produce undesirable outcomes when implemented excessively or without sufficient consideration of the patient's psychological and communicative needsOne of the principal risks is communicative pressure. When a physician relies excessively on authoritative expressions such as *"You must do this"* or *"There is no other option"*, the patient may perceive the interaction as coercive rather than supportive.Another potential consequence is the restriction of patient autonomy. If the physician presents only one treatment option and does not adequately explain its alternatives, risks, and benefits, the patient may experience difficulties in making an informed decision.Furthermore, the excessive use of professional terminology, complex syntactic constructions, and insufficiently explained medical concepts may create cognitive barriers. Such communication can prevent patients from fully understanding the information provided.Persuasion may also negatively affect interpersonal trust when emotional pressure replaces rational explanation or when the physician's professional authority is used to disregard the patient's concerns.Fleisje (2023) distinguishes persuasion from convincing and recommending, emphasizing that attempts to obtain a patient's consent despite their contrary preferences may involve communicative paternalism. This distinction highlights the ethical importance of maintaining a balance between professional guidance and patient autonomy

Consequently, the effectiveness of persuasive and recommendatory strategies should not be evaluated exclusively in terms of whether the patient accepts the physician's proposal. Their communicative quality must also be assessed according to transparency, mutual understanding, respect, and informed decision-making.

The analysis indicates that persuasion and recommendation constitute significant cognitive-pragmatic strategies in English-language medical discourse. Their implementation involves a combination of lexical, grammatical, syntactic, and pragmatic resources through which healthcare professionals communicate medical knowledge, express professional opinions, and influence patients' health-related decisions.The positive communicative potential of these strategies is manifested in improved treatment adherence, strengthened interpersonal trust, reduced uncertainty, and increased patient engagement. However, excessive directiveness, manipulative argumentation, and insufficient consideration of individual preferences may result in communicative pressure, diminished autonomy, and weakened doctor–patient relationships.Therefore, the effective implementation of persuasion and recommendation requires a patient-centred approach based on evidence, empathy, linguistic clarity, and shared decision-making. From a psycholinguistic and cognitive-pragmatic perspective, the success of these strategies depends not merely on the linguistic form of an utterance but also on how the patient interprets, evaluates, and responds to the communicative intention.Ultimately, persuasion and recommendation should function not as instruments of unilateral influence but as communicative mechanisms that facilitate informed, respectful, and cooperative medical interaction.

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