PHILOSOPHY

HOW DOCTORS THINK

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I attended yesterday a video talk by Jerome Groopman as he had become too ill to travel from Boston to San Francisco. His speech was one of the highlights of this year's ATS conference – basically a summary of his new book "How doctors think". It tells you about MDs and how they make up their diagnosis. Mostly everything goes right but sometimes everything goes wrong. According to empirical research a working diagnosis is already being made within 18 seconds – pretty fast and sometimes too fast before all relevant questions have been asked. Groopman thinks (1) that there is a general tendency to stay in safe harbor (2) that we stick too often to well-known templates and (3) that the emotional temperature often determines further decisions. Some questions to ask are "What else could it be?" or "Does anything contradict my current view".

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