

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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