



# An Unusual Case of Invisibility

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In recent months I have required medical consultation. Nothing unusual—a pacemaker, a joint replacement. I have been accompanied to my appointments by a family member or a younger friend. I do this because I am a woman in my 80s and felt it prudent to have someone with me. I am a mentally and physically active licensed psychologist. I have long served as a faculty member in a psychiatry department with a residency training program. I take courses in foreign affairs, attend concerts, play tennis, and engage in continuing education in my specialty.

Yet, inevitably, the doctor turns to my daughter, my son, or my younger friend and talks to *them* about *me*. I can only conclude that I must be perceived as incompetent, or invisible. Else why would my physicians not speak directly to me?

I checked with friends, and they all report the same thing. Their doctors speak to their escorts and not to them.

My generation has redefined the concept of aging. It is time for physicians and future physicians to similarly redefine the paternalistic culture of medicine. *Please talk to me! I am here.*

## Declarations

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