

OSF physician applauds SNL skit about young men not going to the doctor

As Saturday Night Live celebrates its 50th anniversary, one thing it has been known for over the decades is the use of comedy to make a commentary on what's happening in the world. Recently, it was a skit about how the only way to get a young man to an annual physical is to pretend it's a podcast appearance.

OSF HealthCare primary care physician, Mfowethu Langeni, DO, said he heard about the skit and then watched it with appreciation.

"So hopefully this can help encourage people to change that mindset and change the framing and letting them know that we will see you even if you have no symptoms, no issues. Preventive health is equally as important as any other aspect of health care."

Nearly 40% of Generation Z men (age 20-29) don't have a primary care provider and millennial men (age 29-43) make up the second-highest number of men without regular primary care [according to one study](#).

Using comedy to tell hard truths can be an effective tool so Dr. Langeni hopes the skit breaks through the perception of many young men – a feeling they are invincible and therefore don't need medical attention unless they experience serious symptoms.

[Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) also reveals young men have a misperception they are healthier than they are.

"A good portion of men between the age of 18 and 35 are actually in probably fair to poor condition as far as health is concerned. So, I think the first thing we do when you walk in the door in a primary doctor's office, we check your weight, we check your vitals, and we check blood pressure. Those are some really quick things that we can get, but it can tell a lot of information."

For example, Dr. Langeni says Type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure don't always have prominent symptoms right away and without an annual exam, they can go undetected for years. That poses the risk of irreversible harm. During an initial primary care visit, Dr. Langeni says he'll also go over family history because there are some diseases, including cancer, that can be genetically linked.

"And so, if your father or mother or grandmother, uncle had a condition, you could also be predisposed to that condition as well. So, we address these things, we talk about these things, and then we come up with shared decision making and figure out what to do next."

[Research](#) also shows men are increasingly turning to social media platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok for their health information, often relying on influencers. That's not all bad, says Dr. Langeni, but he says having a primary care provider as a trusted source is a great way to verify information from social media.

"I promote people getting information, but the big thing is just then take the information and then ask, 'Hey, what's true? What's not true, or if it is, is this right for me?' If it's not right for me, because everyone is individually different, having a primary doctor really will help to cater to your individual plan."

With [OSF MyChart](#), you can also easily access your primary care provider with questions about a variety of concerns, including medications, supplements, or issues that might arise between appointments. If it requires a referral to a specialist, your primary care provider can make that happen. Dr. Langeni suggests thinking of a primary care provider as someone who is a care coordinator and your advocate.

National statistics reveal other health realities men might consider. For example, men die by suicide at twice the rate of women and 40.5% of men over 20 have obesity. A primary care provider can help with lifestyle changes and medication, if necessary, to address obesity. Some mental health challenges can be managed at the primary care level, but Dr. Langeni says having a professional you trust to discuss stress, anxiety, depression or other concerns is crucial. Then, he says, your provider can recommend whether seeing a behavioral health specialist might be the best approach.

Just as you take your car in for a regular oil change, Dr. Langeni strongly suggests regular health maintenance with a primary care provider. Putting it another way, he emphasizes, "primary care is preventive care" and that's nothing to laugh at.