

Me to Doctor: You're FIRED!

"I'm just so frustrated!" my girlfriend said as she wiped her son's perpetually runny nose. "He just won't listen to me."

She had been unhappy with her pediatrician for more than a year now. The litany of blunders, rude behavior from staff and misdiagnoses this doctor had cast upon my friend was almost comical. I say "almost" because it's not funny when your kid pays the price.

I know. I went through it with Ben, my 9-year-old. From the time he was born, he had a stuffed-up nose, and when he would breathe he made this noise that I can only describe as rattling.

"Rattling?" asked my pediatrician, perplexed. "Do you mean wheezing?"

I knew what wheezing sounded like. This wasn't it. No, he rattled!

My pediatrician told me many, many times (with my older daughter and now with Ben) that he himself had suffered from asthma his whole life. He said that from the very first time I mentioned the rattling and stuffy nose, he thought Ben had asthma, too.

I didn't believe it. I just knew he didn't have asthma, but after one year and seven sinus infections and that stupid rattle, I gave in and went to "Orange County's Best Asthma Doctor." He did a full allergy test – the one that looks like a medieval torture board with needles – and had him breathe into lots of things.

"He has asthma," the doctor told me, but he wasn't allergic to anything. And with that news, I burst into tears. The doctor thought it was because I was upset Ben had asthma. I thought

it was that, too, but looking back it was because I just knew he didn't. I was frustrated.

He set Ben on a course of steroids, twice-daily breathing treatments and other medicines I can't even remember now. I dutifully filled the prescriptions and started Ben on the treatments. Facing my pediatrician for the first time wasn't pretty.

"He told me it was asthma, after all," I said, though I still wasn't buying it.

Then one day at work, my boss mentioned that he'd had his adenoids removed as a kid. For the life of me, I can't remember what we were talking about, but something in me jumped – like the inner mom in me went snap! That's it!

I ran out of his office – literally ran – and looked up "adenoids" on the computer at my desk: repeated sinus infections (check), family history of enlarged adenoids (check), breathing sounds like a ... wait for it ... rattle! (Um ... check!)

I went home. I threw away all the steroids, returned the rented breathing machine and called "The Best Ears, Nose and Throat Doctor in Orange County."

The doctor took one look at Ben and said, "He has enlarged adenoids." He said Ben's sunken eyes and breathing told him all he needed to know. Ben had surgery the next month and never again had another sinus infection. The rattling was gone.

After telling this story, I ended by telling my friend: "Fire your pediatrician!"

"Can I do that?" she asked.

I did, and it was a relief. You don't need permission or need to feel guilty. If your doctor is not doing his job, he should

be replaced. Your child's health might depend on it.

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