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You are in your first full time job out of college and are working for an organization that supports families whose children are at risk for developmental delays based on social and medical history. When you talk to the child development specialist you are shadowing during your first week, you ask him about the steps involved in identifying a child as delayed and eligible for services. He says, “There are some forms we need to fill out, but mainly, I just go by my gut instinct, and I’m usually right.”

My first response that I would think to myself is umm what, is he serious!? I understand that he probably sees cases like this all the time, but to just go with your gut is not the correct professional response. Anyone can go with their instinct on a diagnosis, trained or not, but that does not mean that you are giving them the correct information.

In my higher education I have learned that without the correct training you should not diagnose someone based on what you think, and also that people are misdiagnosed. Because people are already misdiagnosed from time to time with all the correct tests being done, for someone to just wing it and not fill out paperwork correctly and to just use their best judgment is wrong. If someone were to do that and be misdiagnosing children and have them find out that they just used their best judgment, they could be at risk for losing their job.

I would ask him why he did not take the extra time to correctly diagnose a child and ensure that he was doing it correctly. I would also ask him why he thought that it was okay to just wing it and go by his gut instinct with such a strong life changing topic. It is not like he is just taking a quiz in class, this is a child’s life that is put into his hands and they trust him for medical advice. I would also ask him how many times he has not been right when going with his gut instinct. Based on that answer I would frame my other questions such as if anyone else knew about this or if there were any complaints.

My next step in my new job would be to talk to someone higher up about what I had heard. I do not think it is professional what so ever to not take all the steps and precautions when diagnosing a child. I understand that as a new employee this may cause problems, but with my child development education I am supposed to be an advocate for the children, and I cannot fully do that if I keep something that I think is wrong a secret. I am just as much in the fault as he is by knowing about it and not saying anything.