

# History taking

Answering student questions about your health condition and history



This involves students taking your medical history in a small group setting and/or exploring the impact your condition has on you and your family. The students usually

work through a series of questions that help them to formulate a diagnosis and they may ask questions about how your condition has impacted on you.

Students might ask about:

- Presenting complaint – what you noticed when you first became ill or what the current problem is.
- History of presenting complaint – any changes with your illness that have occurred over time.
- Past medical history – any long-standing conditions, previous illness or operations that you have had and the outcome.
- Family history – if anyone in your family has had anything similar. Students may ask about the health of your parents, brothers and sisters and children.
- Social history – questions about smoking, drinking alcohol, levels of physical activity, where and who you live with and your occupation as this may be relevant to some illnesses.
- Drug history and allergies – whether you are taking any medicines prescribed by a doctor and whether you use any medicines from a chemist, herbalist or another source.

## Giving feedback to students following a session

We are keen for Patient Educators to give feedback to students following a teaching session as this helps them to improve their practice. Feedback is best given immediately after something has happened so both parties remember what has occurred and should be given about things that can be changed and not things that can't.

- Ask the student what they thought went well or what they were particularly pleased with. You can also tell the student about something you thought

went well. Always try to find at least one good thing to say and be specific - there is less value in saying that was 'very good' or that was 'not so good'. The feedback should address the good or poor performance of the student, for example: "I like the way you made me feel comfortable"; or, "you asked the questions in a very clear way"; or, "it would be better if you didn't use medical jargon as I didn't always understand what you were saying".

- Ask the student if they had any problems or if there was anything they were not happy with and why. You can also share aspects that you observed that did not go so well and how you think it could be improved.
- Your feedback could improve student practice so try to ensure that what you say can be seen and measured in some way; for example: "you seemed to have some difficulty listening to my heart. Normally, when my doctor does that, they put the stethoscope here".

## Health and safety

If you feel unwell on the day of teaching and can't attend the session, please just let us know. If you become unwell during a session, please alert the facilitator who will ensure you are looked after.

The facilitator will let you know about general housekeeping and the location of fire exits before the session starts. If they don't, please ask for this information. Please complete the emergency contact form that is on our website and bring it with you to give to the facilitator at the start of the teaching session.



## General tips

- The facilitator may ask you to imagine that you are presenting your symptoms for the first time even though your condition might have been diagnosed some time ago. In any case it would be a good idea to write a brief list of your past medical history, the symptoms you experienced when you went to the doctor, your current symptoms and your current medication so you can refer to this if you need to.