THE MICROSKILLS OF CLINICAL TEACHING

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Session goals

- Describe a time efficient framework for clinical teaching
- Present the one minute preceptor model and the related microskills of clinical teaching
- Practice microskills teaching strategies
One Minute Preceptor model

Teach
3. Provide positive feedback
4. Teach general rules
5. Correct errors

Diagnose Learner
1. Ask for a commitment
2. Probe for underlying reasoning

Diagnose Patient
• Listen
• Clarify

Five Precepting Microskills

1. Get a Commitment
2. Probe for Underlying Reasoning
3. Provide Positive Feedback
4. Teach General Rules
5. Correct Errors

Teach

Diagnose Learner
Tips on using the microskills

• Clarify your expectations and learners’ expectations
• Allow, or even force, the learner, to present the patient without interruption.
• Make them commit to a diagnosis or plan and give the rationale for these decisions before critiquing the presentation.
• Teaching includes indicating resources as well as telling the answers.
• It’s okay for either preceptor or learner to say "I don’t know", as long as the next step is to actively address the problem (e.g. by seeking the missing knowledge, re-analyzing the situation) and actively learning from the situation.
• Provide both reinforcement of positive actions and constructive correction of mistakes or misconceptions.
• Coach and enjoy!
Get a Commitment

• Early into an encounter with a teacher, the learner should be encouraged to make a commitment to a diagnosis, work-up, or therapeutic plan.
• The learner feels responsible for patient care, and enjoys a more collaborative role in problem solving.
• Supportive environment of intellectual honesty required.
• **Cue:** When learner presents patient facts and then stops; resist urge to fill in the verbal blanks!
• Do not confuse this step with collecting further data.
Get a commitment

- Differential diagnosis
  *What....? (do you think is going on or is most likely?)*

- Diagnostic strategy
  *What....? (investigations should be ordered?)*

- Selection of therapy
  *What....? (is your first choice of medication?)*

- Prognosis
  *What....? (do you think is probably going to happen?)*

- Management issue
  *Why....? (do you think this patient is non-compliant?)*
  *What....? (would you like to achieve this admission)*
Probe for supporting evidence

• Help the learner reflect upon the mental processes used to arrive at a decision.
• Identify what the learner does and does not know.
• **Cue:** the learner commits to a stance and looks to the teacher for confirmation; suppress the desire to pass judgement!
• This is not a grilling session! "Thinking out loud" must be a low-risk adventure.
Probe for supporting evidence

• What are the major findings that lead to your conclusion?
• What else did you consider?
• What made you choose that particular treatment
• Why.......(do you suggest getting this test first?)
• Which.....(medications are available for this condition?)
• How.......(did this prognosis emerge as the most probable?)
Teach general rules

- The teacher can skip this step! It is not imperative that the teacher "teach something" every time.
- Keep it brief and focused on identified issues
- Avoid anecdotes and idiosyncratic preferences
- Keep it to 1-3 general rules at most.
- Example:
  - "If the patient has cellulitis, incision and drainage are usually not possible. However, an abscess, which can be drained, is typically heralded by the development of fluctuance."
  - "In older patients with headache, it is important to consider glaucoma and temporal arteritis as well as the primary headaches. We should consult ____ if symptoms include ___"
Reinforce what was done well

- Competencies must be repeatedly rewarded and reinforced.
- Build upon the learner's professional self-esteem.
- Focus on specific behaviors.
- Example:
  - "You considered the patient's finances in your selection of therapy. Your sensitivity to this will certainly contribute to improving his compliance."
Correct errors (gently)

- We frequently tend to put this step first.
- An appropriate time and place must be chosen.
- Ask learners to critique their own performance first.
- Focus on how to correct the problem or avoid it in the future.
- Example:
  - "You could be right that this patient's symptoms are due to myocardial ischemia; but without considering other possibilities, we could easily miss things like PE or pericarditis. So, try to keep the differential diagnoses broad."
Identify next learning steps

• Fosters self-directed learning; facilitate the learner identifying his/her needs.
• Offer specific resources; the teacher can role model their own learning approaches.
• Agree upon an action plan.
• Examples:
  – "What do you think you need to learn more about?"
  – "That's a good topic to look up. I tend to use ________ as a first step in looking up information. Let's agree to meet ____ to discuss what you've reviewed."


