

Supervise medical students using parallel consulting

Parallel consulting (or wave consulting) is one of the most effective and efficient ways to supervise medical students in general practice. It allows students to run semi-independent consultations with patients while ensuring clinical oversight and maintaining practice flow. This model of supervision promotes active learning and facilitates clinical reasoning and consultation skill development.

Parallel consulting, or wave consulting, is when students consult with patients in parallel with their supervisor. This might involve a single or pair of students.

STEPS TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE PARALLEL CONSULTING

Assess the student's competence and confidence before starting

Prepare for parallel consulting

Student consultations

Case discussion

Follow up and provide feedback

Reflection

The steps are as follows:

- A patient is booked in to see the supervisor in one consulting room, and another is booked in to see the medical student at the same time in another consulting room
- The student sees the patient independently, taking the history and performing an examination as appropriate
- Once the supervisor has finished with their patient, they join the student in their room
- The student presents the patient to the supervisor
- The supervisor reviews key elements of the consultation and finalises diagnosis and management.

This 'How to...' resource outlines a recommended approach that supervisors of medical students can use to undertake parallel consulting.

EXAMPLE OF PARALLEL CONSULTING SCHEDULE

TIME	MEDICAL STUDENT	GP SUPERVISOR
9:00 – 9:15	Sees patient 1 independently	Sees patient 2
9:15 – 9:30	patient 1	Joins student for review patient 1, provides micro-teaching
9:30 – 9:45	Sees patient 3 independently	Sees patient 4
9:45 – 10:00	patient 3	Joins student for review patient 3, provides micro-teaching
10:00 – 10:15	Reading time	Sees patient 5

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Start small e.g. one or two patients per session while confidence builds
- Be time aware
- Debrief regularly – encourage reflection

Assess the student's competence and confidence before starting

Assess the readiness of the student for semi-independent consulting

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| TIPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake direct observation of the student and assess their consultation and communication skills, and note-taking• Review university resources to understand learning objectives and competency standards |
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Prepare for parallel consulting

Prepare the student and practice team

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| TIPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the parallel consulting process with the student and practice team• Instruct the reception staff to appropriately book and consent patients to the process, as it will increase the time they are in the practice (ideally this happens at the time the patient books their appointment)• Consider whether any patients or presentations (as known) are unsuitable for the student |
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Student consultations

Facilitate the student to see the semi-independently

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| TIPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure appropriate communication with, and consent of patients• Consider a focussed goal e.g. history taking• Encourage exploration of preventive care and social history• Encourage review of the medical record and appropriate documentation• Discuss a process for when the supervisor or student is significantly delayed |
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Case discussion

Facilitate a case discussion that allows for both safe patient care and student learning

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| TIPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage the student to present the patient to you as a problem representation• Probe for further information from both the patient and student as needed• Involve the student in discussion with the patient around diagnosis and management• Provide micro-teaching• Discuss key learning points and relevant resources |
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Follow up and provide feedback

Give feedback to the student on their performance

Follow up patients and learning goals

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| TIPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage the student to follow up the outcome of patients• Encourage the student to pursue learning goals• Give specific feedback on history taking, clinical reasoning etc. |
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Reflection

Encourage the registrar to self-reflect on their progress

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| TIPS | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage open, honest self-reflection• Role model reflective practice |
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