







SKILLS

CONSULTATION SKILLS

Time Management

Time management is a core skill of the effective GP. There is evidence that poor time management is linked to doctor stress and patient dissatisfaction. Time management in the general practice environment is particularly challenging, where every clinical assessment is required to be sufficiently comprehensive in scope to manage the presenting issues and exclude potentially serious causes, but also time efficient in order to meet patient demand. This can be especially challenging for the new GP registrar making the transition from the hospital setting. While time management is a core consulting skill, it is one that can take some time to develop. Supervisors can teach registrars a range of skills to manage time effectively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING AREAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common reasons for time management issues – doctor, patient, clinical presentation, system • Strategies for effective time management • How to manage the patient 'list' 		
PRE-SESSION ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the 2018 AJGP paper ‘Ten tips for becoming a Time Lord’ 		
ACTIVITIES 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time management skills are ideally taught through role play and discussion, and direct and reverse direct observation • See over page for activities 		
TEACHING TIPS AND TRAPS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended waiting is a common reason for patient dissatisfaction (though this is offset by having sufficient time with the GP) • Accept that running late at times is inevitable • Spend time at the beginning of the session preparing for the consultations ahead • Time management can be enhanced by identifying the patient agenda early – strategies include asking about ICE (ideas, concerns, expectations) and the initial use of silence • Ask the patient to prioritise their list of problems • Simple system changes can make a big difference to time management – less frequent bookings, preparation before the encounter, minimising interruptions • Encourage the registrar to sit in with you while you consult (reverse direct observation) 		
RESOURCES 	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="323 1843 430 2022">Read</td> <td data-bbox="430 1843 1498 2022"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the AVANT resource Managing my time </td> </tr> </table>	Read	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the AVANT resource Managing my time
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FOLLOW UP & EXTENSION ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read The Ultimate Time Management Guide for GPs • Review the Bradford Vocation Training Scheme resources on time management 		

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Activities

ROLE PLAY AND DISCUSSION

1. Role play the following case with the registrar
2. Ask the registrar to focus on prioritising the issues

CASE SCENARIO

You are Pat, aged 53, and present with a list of concerns that you wish to discuss. You have only booked a 15 minute appointment but are keen to cover a number of issues because you 'rarely have time to get to the doctor'. You want to discuss the following problems:

- Numbness in your right hand over the past few weeks since painting your lounge room
- A skin lesion on your arm which has got darker
- Increasing frequency of heartburn episodes over the past few months despite taking your Somac every day
- Scripts for your Somac, Coversyl and Crestor
- Do you really need to take the statin? You are worried about side effects after seeing something on TV
- Review of a recent 24 hour BP monitor which was done because your BP is not well controlled
- Concerns about your mother's deteriorating memory and what should be done
- Do you need any blood tests?

3. More broadly, discuss the issue of time management, with a focus on:

- What are the main reasons for poor time management? See the table right
- How does the registrar feel when running late?
- What are the main reasons the registrar runs late?
- Useful strategies

Factors influencing time management

DOCTOR

- 'Needing to cover it all'
- Perfectionism

SYSTEM

- Booking frequency
- Interruptions
- 'Fit-ins'

PATIENT

- Talkative
- Lists
- Communication barriers e.g. NESB

PRESENTATION

- Acute presentations
- Complex illness
- Mental health

REVERSE DIRECT OBSERVATION

1. Invite the registrar to sit in on one (or more) of your consultations
2. Ask them to critically appraise your time management
3. Discuss your approach to, and tips for, effective time management