

## Remains responsive to the patient

**Green** – Interacts with the patient and modifies tone and language in response to the situation

**Red** – Fails to interact with the patient and demonstrates a fixed or insensitive agenda

**Green** – Allows the patient to speak and express their concerns or preferences

**Red** – Ignores or responds in a dismissive way to patient ICE and any cues offered

**Green** – Listens carefully to the patient ICE and verbal cues sensitively

**Red** – Interrupts or speaks over a patient

**Green** – Acknowledges and responds to patient preferences for examination, investigation and management

**Red** – Ignores or denigrates patient preferences for examination, investigation and management

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### About this global skill

Being responsive to the patient is an important component of consulting effectively.

Without responsiveness, the patient consultation will appear insensitive to the patient, jarring and possibly even rude or hostile.

More importantly, the patient will feel that he/she is not being listened to - and will therefore be less likely to engage with the consultation or share important information. Or even worse - may become disengaged from the consultation, confused, upset or angry.

Responsiveness to the patient is a composite skill, and includes careful listening, an interest in the presenting problem, and a willingness to follow where the patient leads. It is an important counterbalance to the global skill 'Structures consultation', as a consultation without any structure will feel chaotic and out of control whereas a consultation without responsiveness will feel regimented and insensitive to the patient.

### Audio consultations

Being responsive to the patient is harder in audio consultations than face-to-face consultations. Problems with the audio link may make interrupting the patient more frequent, and it is harder to detect confusion or disengagement or frustration within the consultation. It is also harder to demonstrate empathy over an audio link. It is therefore important to speak clearly and slowly, and check that the patient is happy with the consultation and with the advice being offered

### Educational activities

**Activity 1:** Review several of your video consultations initially on your own and then with your trainer or experienced colleague. Do you think you have listened enough to your patients? In particular, consider:

- Do you interrupt patients?
- Do you allow patients to finish explaining their concern or preferences?

- Do you sensitively explore cues?
- Do you let the patient know that they have been heard and understood?
- Do you use ICE and information obtained from cues to guide discussion with the patient?
- Are there signs that the patient is becoming disengaged, confused or even upset or angry?

**Activity 2:** Now apply the results of activity (1) to future consultations. As with other activities, try to improve one skill at a time. For example, if you discover that you frequently interrupt the patient, then focus entirely on completing consultations without interrupting. How does this alter the effectiveness of the consultation?

**Activity 3:** Once you are sure that you have made significant changes in responding to the patient, watch a couple of consultation videos with your trainer. Ask the trainer whether the changes have improved your responsiveness, and whether this has altered the effectiveness of the consultation?

## Audio consultations

Review several of your audio consultations and ask the same questions that you ask in Activity 1 above. How does you compare in terms of responsiveness in audio v face-to-face consultations? What could you do differently in the audio setting to improve this?

## Reflective activity

**Exercise 1:** If you are adopting a lot of behaviours that indicate that you realise are not responsive to the patient, ask why this is happening? Possibilities include:

- lack of time
- lack of interest in the problem that the patient is bringing
- lack of confidence/knowledge in managing a particular problem
- lack of knowledge
- stress

**Exercise 2:** Ask yourself why you are short of time/lacking in confidence etc. What can you do to make your consultations less pressured?

## Related tasks

Practicing and developing the skill of '*Remains responsive to the patient*' will allow you to achieve the following tasks more effectively:

- Discovers patient's psycho-social context
- Identifies cues
- Discovers patient's ICE
- Makes a working diagnosis
- Offers a safe patient centred management plan
- Provides follow up/safety net

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