

Finishes data gathering by 6 mins

Green – Data gathering, including undertaking appropriate examination and tests takes longer than 6 minutes

Red – Data gathering is completed by 6 minutes allowing time for clinical management and decision making

About this global skill

During a 10-minute consultation, it is important to allow enough time for a safe *patient centred* management plan to be shared and outlined. Appropriate safety-netting and follow up need to be completed too. Doctors who struggle to reach this point, commonly spend more than 6 minutes on data gathering tasks.

Audio consultations

It can be easier to fit in quite a lot of clinical management options into only 4 minutes of an audio consultation, but only if the structure of the preceding data gathering section has been well organized and comprehensive. This guidance 'by 6 minutes' can therefore be more loosely applied and this is often because a clinical examination is a smaller part of the consultation, but conversely the history taking may need to be longer as there are no visual cues.

The global skills of '*Structures consultation*' and '*Progresses through tasks*' may be more likely to be diagnostic of problems in an audio consultation as a result.

Educational Activities

Activity 1: If you are scoring RED or AMBER for this skill over a series of consultations, try and breakdown what you are doing during data gathering. Are you progressing through the tasks? Have a look at the '*Progresses through tasks*' global skill descriptors if you are not sure.

If you are not progressing through tasks, try and analyse *why* not. Commonly this is due to poorly executed interpersonal skills in the data gathering section see Activity 2.

Activity 2: Consider, is the problem due to...

- Too early use of closed questions
- Failing to detect cues and/or failing to explore cues
- Poor listening
- Repetition of questions and comments
- Too much or 'overzealous permission seeking' (see '*Uses closed questions appropriately*')
- A tendency to ask a lot of questions "just in case you might miss something"
- Offering indiscriminate clinical examination and/or tests

Now produce a written list of these problem areas and tackle them one by one – video/record any changes you make and let your trainer see them.

Look at individual sections of the interpersonal skills to help you change your behaviours, in particular the

interpersonal skills below:

'Identifies cues'

'Uses open questions appropriately'

'Clarifies and explores cues offered'

'Uses closed questions appropriately'

Audio consultations

Activities 1 and 2 are useful activities to work through, if a doctor repeatedly fails to finish by 6 minutes.

In addition, try the following activity:

How long do you spend on data collection in audio consultations? Review a series of audio consultations and measure the time it takes to completely finish data collection. Is this period shorter or longer than in your face-to-face consultations? If the time period is shorter, think why this might be the case?

Now consider how you could use the extra time to make the consultation more effective and satisfactory. Consider some options:

- More time spent on open questions
- More time spent on exploring cues
- More time spent on asking about ICE and psychosocial context
- More time spent later using ICE/patient info in sharing the management plan

Related tasks

Practicing and developing the skill of *'Finishes data gathering by 6 mins'* will allow you to achieve the following tasks more effectively:

- Discovers patient's psycho-social context
- Identifies cues
- Discovers patient's ICE
- Generates / tests diagnostic hypotheses
- Rules in / out serious disease
- Undertakes appropriate examination and tests

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