

Seeks informed consent

Green – Discusses choice of examination with patient and links to consent and need for chaperone

Red – Does not verbalise rationale for choice of examination, chaperone or consent

Green – Performs clinical examination with appropriate signposting and explanation

Red – Performs clinical examination without any signposting or explanation

Green – Explains rationale for any investigation(s) chosen and links explanation to consent process

Red – Does not explain the rationale for the investigation(s) chosen and fails to incorporate the explanation into the consent process

About this skill

Consent and offering a chaperone show a respect for the patient and demonstrate ethical sensitivity. Importantly, obtaining informed consent is not a tick box process, but an important process where you share what is involved in the examination and ensure that the patient understands what is going to happen, and has no concerns about the examination or investigation. Without proper consent, you are failing to respect the patient and their right to refuse an examination and/or investigation. There is an additional risk with intimate examinations that the patient may later claim you did not take adequate steps to explain the reasons for the examination and therefore that you failed in your duty of care.

Doctors who take care to explain to a patient and seek informed consent will also benefit from the process of 'putting into words', the reasons for the examination and/or tests. Doing this will help to focus the diagnostic process in their minds.

Audio consultations

Informed consent for examination is much rarer in an audio consultation than in a face-to-face consultation. However, there may be a need to obtain informed consent for mental state examinations, sensitive history taking, and when you need to speak to other members of the family. It is important to speak clearly and slowly, and make sure that the patient fully understands what they are consenting to.

Educational Activities

Activity 1: Review a series of consultations. Do you always ask for consent and offer a chaperone if appropriate? How do you lead into the examination? What phrases do you use? (see above)

Activity 2: Does the patient seem to understand what will happen in the examination or investigation? Could you make your explanation easier to understand or more transparent?

Activity 3: Alter your approach to the consultation so that these attitudes become routine for you.

Audio consultations

Do you ever ask for consent in an audio consultation? Review a series of audio consultations and find out in what areas you ask for consent? Should you do this more often?

Reflective exercises

Exercise 1: How do you know if your technique for obtaining informed consent is adequate? How much information do you need to give? How can the process of obtaining informed consent go wrong?

Related tasks

Practicing and developing the skill of '*Seeks informed consent*' will allow you to achieve the following tasks more effectively:

- Undertakes appropriate examination and tests

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