

HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF TUTORIALS

Advice for Registrars

INTRODUCTION

The tutorial session is a golden educational opportunity. However for it to be as effective as possible, it needs to be well planned and structured. Here are a few suggestions.

CONTENT

- LEARNING NEEDS AND METHODS
- PLANNING, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
- QUESTIONING AND EXPLANATION
- LISTENING
- RESPONDING
- FEEDBACK
- EVALUATION

LEARNING NEEDS AND METHODS

- Use your *Educational Plan* to select topics. There are a number of ways of identifying your *Learning Needs* e.g. rating scales, past educational profile, reflection on clinical practice, PUNS and DENS, case analysis, phased evaluation programmes, “blind spots”, previous tutorials, SCOT analysis, analysis of referrals and admissions, difficult situations, feedback from staff and patients, audit and video analysis.
- Consider the most appropriate *Learning Method* for each topic, bearing in mind your preferred *Learning Style*. e.g. study day, OPD, case analysis, problem based learning, joint visit or surgery, tutorial, role play.
- Although often the most commonly used, a tutorial may not be the most interesting/stimulating/appropriate way of learning about a topic.
- Perhaps another member of the Primary Health Care Team would be more suitable to give the tutorial e.g. the practice manager if the topic is practice finance.

PLANNING, AIMS and OBJECTIVES

- At least 1 week before the tutorial, agree the topic with your trainer
- Discuss what features about the topic would be particularly helpful to discuss in greater depth i.e. *the learning objectives*. Think about the issues you need to understand to be able to apply the factual knowledge to your every day practice e.g. when to refer patients for consideration of secondary causes of hypertension, rather than discussing very rare possible underlying conditions in detail.
- Agree who will do what before the tutorial e.g.: look up references, prepare information, consider some clinical scenarios, find clinical guidelines or practice protocols.
- Try to make it *Evidence-Based*.
- Ensure un-interrupted session, preferably not in the consulting room.
- Turn up on time, which will encourage your trainer to be prompt.

- Prior to starting, discuss any outstanding patient concerns with your trainer so that you can concentrate on the tutorial
- At start of tutorial agree a timing schedule for each area.

QUESTIONING AND EXPLANATION

- Use questions to clarify any unclear points and to ensure that your learning needs are met. Your trainer will probably ask you some open questions to ascertain your knowledge level at the start of the tutorial.
- The lower your knowledge base, the greater will be the need for information transfer (spoon feeding!). In this case the Trainer is likely to say more than you and dominate the tutorial.
- Once the basic knowledge has been established, it is appropriate to move up to more developed issues such as Concepts/Principles, Skills/Procedures, Attitudes/Values.
- It may be useful to use a clinical case as the focus for the discussion (*problem-based learning*).

LISTENING

- Don't let your trainer dominate the tutorial. Aim for approximately 50:50 contribution, perhaps more in favour of you as the registrar.
- Listen to what the trainer has prepared, as previously agreed, but try to use him/her as an educational facilitator rather than as a lecturer.

RESPONDING

- Look interested (even if you aren't!).
- Try and contribute to an interactive dialogue.
- Your trainer may steer the tutorial, but make sure it is meeting your learning needs and objectives and if not, suggest that it would be helpful to move on to another aspect.
- Consider time limitations.

FEEDBACK

- Your trainer will probably ask questions at the end to ascertain your (hopefully now improved) level of knowledge and understanding.
- They may see if you could apply this to a simulated clinical scenario
- Try and allow time to discuss any immediately related issues.
- Ask for any articles or useful written material your trainer may have on the topic
- Obtain further references as necessary.
- Discuss future learning needs arising from the Tutorial, e.g. the need for a further tutorial on a related subject, advice to read a particular book or arranging a visit to a particular clinic.
- Agree a summary of what has been discussed

- Write up a reflective practice form outlining what was discussed, the key learning points and future learning needs.
- Update your portfolio and educational plan

EVALUATION

- In addition to the reflective practice described above, you may be asked to provide a brief evaluation of the tutorial. A simple score out of ten is fairly meaning less. Consider using some of the following headings:
- *Content*: did it contain the appropriate subject material?
- *Intention* - did the tutorial achieve your learning objectives?
- *Process* - were the methods used helpful e.g. handouts, clinical scenarios, discussion?
- *Style* - e.g. the way the interaction occurred. Did it suit your learning style?
- *Relevance* - was it relevant to your every day clinical practice?
- *Structure* – was too much time spent on one component?
- *Setting* - e.g. time of day, quality of coffee, location, enough time etc.!!

If areas could be improved next time, discuss this with your trainer so that you can get the most out of a tutorial.

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