

Teachers' toolkit

Planning, teaching and evaluating a clinical skills session

Factors to Consider before the Teaching Session

1. How do we get there? – Ensure all participants are familiar with the location and transport links (including car parking facilities and charges.)
2. Do we have to do anything before the session? - Ensure easy access to learning objectives and any preparatory work you may wish learners to undertake (This is often best placed on the www). How will you contact them to tell them it's there?
3. Do people know we are coming? - Ensure ALL staff are informed that the learners are arriving; you may need to seek permission from staff if this is not your own clinical area. Anecdote has taught us that if you only inform one person (particularly the 'boss') rarely, if ever, does anyone else have any knowledge of the learners. Make sure you re-check on the day.
4. Where and who do we meet? - It is essential that learners have a designated place to meet with a named person to meet them and somewhere to place bags and coats (where appropriate).
5. If you have booked rooms or facilities it is worth checking that they are still alright on the day of the session (particularly with large groups)
6. Ensure that any equipment you have booked is present and working, including AV / IT and its support.
7. Ensure real patients are well and still happy to take part in the session. [It is becoming increasingly important to document informal consent has been obtained and any discussions around the patients' role within the session].

Factors to Consider During the Teaching Session

1. Am I able fulfil all the aims and objectives? – By its very nature, teaching with real patients may be fraught with variables that are beyond ones control. It may be necessary to adapt ones plans according to the patients and resources available. Though this is best thought through, and planned for, prior to the session, clinical teaching needs to be flexible and adaptive to match the opportunities and challenges that arise.
2. What does the learner gain from my session? – One needs to think carefully about how one involves all the learners in a session, incorporating time for all of them to practice the skills during the session [It is also useful to provide guidance as to how they can and should practice the skills further after the session].
3. How will they know how well they have done? Providing constructive feedback to learners during and after the session is extremely important but not always practical. In large groups it may be necessary to negotiate with the learners at the start of the session around feedback. Outcomes that encourage self-reflection, and time for peer feedback are useful adjuncts.
4. Quality versus quantity – A common mistake in our eyes is the confusion around quality and quantity. Clinical sessions need to take into account service demands, so better to give the learner one quality teaching episode within a busy clinic or surgery than forcing them to absorb your wisdom and skills by osmosis and telepathy over a long, busy surgery or clinic.
5. Are all participants safe? – You need to ensure the safety of the learners and patients at all times. If you are supervising a trainee performing a relatively unfamiliar skill on a patient, both parties must be kept well informed and overseen at all times.

Factors to Consider After the Teaching Session

1. Feedback to the participants – How will you give feedback to the learners? What form will it take and what impact / significance does it have for them?
2. How will you assess the learning? – This needs to be made clear in the aims and outcomes of the session. How does your session fit in with the wider aims and objectives of the course, module or curriculum?
3. Debriefing the patients – This is rarely done but is useful in terms of ensuring the patient is happy with the session and offering them the chance to raise any concerns. It can be time consuming so needs to be factored into the session.
4. Feedback on your teaching – this is vital to make important changes and improvements to the session as well as for personal development. Getting participants to provide feedback at the end of the session is usually the only way one can guarantee any meaningful feedback.
5. Self – reflection – This is extremely useful to ensure one makes the most of ones own potential; equally being challenged by regular peer review from valued colleagues is also very helpful.