

The REAM approach:

Developing communication skills with GP trainees

Context

Communication skills development is one of the cornerstones of training for general practice. It is well known that trainees can struggle with the subtleties of communication in the consultation. Increasing emphasis on the assessment of trainees' consultation skills using simulation and role-play throughout training has seen GP educators seeking to develop activities to focus on consulting skills early in training.

Summary of work

The aim of this work was to design a teaching activity around communication skills which would raise the awareness of trainees to their approach to the consultation and to help them 'tune' into areas in need of development. GP trainees (ST1-3, n. 76) rotated through a simulated consultation circuit comprising six cases written by RE. The scenarios were non-medical in nature, but still required the trainees to follow a structure – InSPIRE DOCS (see right). This was intended to help the trainees focus on the process rather than the content of the cases. Each trainee role-played one scenario and received feedback from the rest of the group. Trainees were scored using the RCGP marking scheme, and they received written and oral feedback on their performance.

Summary of results

Trainees in ST1/2 valued the opportunity to role-play the problem-solving element of the consultation, and demonstrated use of the consultation model to structure their approach. ST3 trainees felt that the lack of clinical content made the cases less valuable for their stage of learning.

Conclusions

The REAM approach to role-playing case scenarios offers educators:

- a diagnostic tool to explore consultation skills with trainees in the early years;
- a means to explore process over content; and
- a way to identify areas for development.

It is most relevant and valuable to trainees in the first two years of training.

We conclude that REAM is a useful assessment tool for early diagnosis of communication skills difficulties in the consultation.

REAM:

Rachel's
Early
Assessment
Model

InSPIRE DOCS:

Introduce
yourself
Starter question
Psycho social/
Put problem in
context.
Ideas, Concerns
Expectations
Red Flags
Examination
Diagnosis
Options for
treatment
Check
understanding
Safety net

Scan for a sample
scenario



Scan for more
information



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