

4. Precepting Using Microskills

Because time is at a premium in most clinical settings, the following quick technique (1-5 minutes maximum) might be helpful. *Precepting using Microskills* was developed to be used in your office or in the hallway. Its primary purpose is to **assess & improve the Senior Resident’s decision making skills.**

The 6 steps are:

1. Get a commitment
2. Probe for supporting evidence
3. Teach general rules
4. Reinforce what was done well
5. Correct mistakes
6. Encourage reflection & integration.

Video: One Minute Preceptor in action

Get a commitment

After the learner has examined the patient, ask the learner for their diagnosis/treatment/issues before offering your opinion or ideas about how he/she should have proceeded. This is the first step in diagnosing what the student’s learning needs might be.

The Issue	How to Ask for a Commitment
Differential diagnosis	What....? (do you think is going on or is most likely?)
Diagnostic strategy	What....? (investigations should be ordered?)
Selection of therapy	What....? (is your first choice of medication/treatment?)
Prognosis	What....? (do you think is probably going to happen?)
Management issue	Why....? (do you think this patient is non-compliant?) What....? (would you like to achieve this visit)

Probe for supporting evidence

This step gives you the opportunity to see what evidence the learner used to guide their decision. Your teaching goal continues to be “understanding the students thinking process” in a non-judgmental way. Ex. *“What led you to make this decision?”*

Briefly teach general rules

If your probing of the learner reveals the learner needs/wants more knowledge about a particular topic, provide general rules, concepts, metaphors or considerations. Don’t provide the learner with a direct solution to the problem. Don’t provide lengthy explanations. Ex. *“Patients with hypothyroidism often exhibit cold intolerance, weight gain & constipation.”*

Reinforce what was done well

Tell the learner exactly what they did correctly & the effect it had on the patient &/or your clinic. This reinforces the correct knowledge or behaviour. Ex. *“Your probing for more information about the patient’s support system highlighted several points where the patient is going to have problems complying with a standard care plan. Having this knowledge upfront allowed you to suggest alternatives that could be very helpful to this patient.”*