

Effective Medicine in Small Doses

1 Consulting skills and communication issues- *improving outcome of care*

- Dr Yvette Tan

Father of a 5 yr-old boy comes demanding that you should refer him to the cardiologist because of some shortness of breath. You have made a thorough examination of the child and are convinced that it is most likely a psychological cause.

What may be some of your responses?

- Negotiate and acknowledge the underlying concern of the parent. Make plans for future action. (patient-centred)
- Write referral letter as father demanding and it takes too long to explain. (time-centred)
- Refer to specialist as they are the ones who know best.(skill-centred)

Tips:

In a survey of 90 NHG polyclinic doctors on their response to above scenario, 50% chose a doctor- centred response Vs 23% time-centred response Vs 27% skill-centred response.

So what are the benefits of patient-centred care?

- Patient-centredness has been shown to improve outcomes of care, including patient's and doctor's satisfaction.
- Patient-centredness has become one of the key features of quality care.

Patient-centred care consist of 6 domains:

- Exploring illness experience and expectations
- Understanding the whole person
- finding common ground
- health promotion
- enhancing the doctor-patient relationship

3 Elderly Medicine- *Is there a difference in depression in the elderly?*

- Dr Ong Jin Ee

Tips:

Differences in late-onset depression include:

Depression in the elderly tends to be under-diagnosed. It is associated with more life events as well as chronic diseases and disabilities. There is lower frequency of family history of depression and higher frequency of associated cognitive impairment. There is also more somatic presentation and more psychotic features.

Treatment issues:

- Depression tends to be longer lasting in elderly
- May present as physical illnesses requiring more medical services.
- Living arrangement may become institutional as elderly have decline in function

References:

1. Brown et al in 1995 Patient-centred medicine—transforming the clinical model 2. Tan SLY, Goh LG, Whitley R. Patient-centredness: What determines a doctor's clinical behaviour? International Journal of Family Practice and American Family Physicians Dec 2003

2 Child & Adolescent health - *a medical approach to tight foreskin*

- Dr Shah Mitesh

A 3-yr-old Chinese boy is brought by concerned parents to see you. They notice ballooning of prepuce when he urinates past 2 weeks. There are otherwise no symptoms of no genital pain, dysuria or urine frequency. You note phimosis with pinhole prepuce and glans is not seen. His parents are not keen for surgical consult at the moment and ask if anything else can be tried first.

Tips:

One approach to tight foreskin is daily gentle retraction with mild steroid creams or NSAIDs gel or EMLA with petroleum jelly. Choice depends usually on personal experience. My choice is

- Trial of gentle retraction
- 1% hydrocortisone cream bd x 4 wks
- changed to 0.025% betamethasone cream bd x 4 wks
- Review 4 weekly

Revision of normal physiology:

Almost all boys are born with a narrow non-retractile foreskin which is fused with the glans with no "right" age for retraction to occur. A narrow non-retractable prepuce in boys is within the normal range of development and usually causes no problems up to puberty. Prepuce will spontaneously widen until complete retractability is obtained. 50-60 %of boys at age 10 do not have fully retractable foreskins.

After puberty, % of boys with full retractability rapidly increases.

Symptoms of phimosis include ballooning of prepuce, dribbling of urine, urine stains in undergarments, painful erections,pain on urination.

Failed medical treatment warrants referral for circumcision.

4 Improving medical consultation records - *an aide memoire*

- Dr Ong Jin Ee

Ever had patients who walk in greeting you with great familiarity and expect you to know their family history and events?

Tips:

Useful aide memoire is to draw a family genogram on front page of card and note down key history.

Details can always be added on in separate consultations.