



AFP in Practice questions are designed to get you started in a small group learning (SGL) activity in your practice or with colleagues. Requirements to earn 40 Category 1 CPD points for a SGL activity are: minimum of four and a maximum of 10 people, minimum of 8 hours of discussion in a year, and at least two GPs. Groups may include anyone else who has an interest (ie. practice nurses, community health workers, allied health professionals). A kit with all the instructions and forms you need is available at www.racgp.org.au/afpinpractice. You can also earn Category 2 points based on these questions at AFP practice challenge. Visit www.racgp.org.au/practicechallenge

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Learning objectives

After completion of this activity participants will be able to:

- apply a range of skills to assist in communication about complex issues in consultations
- organise knowledge of an undifferentiated illness to apply in a consultation
- integrate a diagnostic strategy into consultations with undifferentiated illness
- suggest a range of strategies to manage your emotions in difficult consultations
- prepare a resource for use in clinical practice.

Category 1 – SGL questions

Domain 1 – Communication skills and the patient-doctor relationship

ICPC code: A99

Communication with patients may present challenges at times. For example, when trying to understand what a patient feels about a problem, such as in the BATHE approach (see the article by Knight); or when trying to explain a condition to a patient such as osteoarthritis, which can be poorly understood by many patients (see the article by Stone).

* Suggested learning activities:

Each group member considers consultations or patients where you have wanted to explore the patient's view, particularly when you want the patient to consider the possibility of a nonphysical cause for their symptoms. What worked? What didn't work? Why? Then discuss as a group the answers, and particularly, what worked. A role play to try different approaches could also be used.

A patient has had a chronic disease for many years, eg. osteoarthritis or hypertension. You realise during a consultation that they have no, or worse a wrong, understanding of the condition. How can you change this so that the patient has a clearer understanding? If this is not achievable, what are your options? Discuss your approaches as a group.

Domain 2 – Applied professional knowledge and skills

ICPC code: T86 or L20 or L19

Knowledge and approaches to problems are key ingredients of general practice.

* Suggested learning activities:

Subclinical hypothyroidism is not uncommon in practice. Discuss as a group what you define it as? For example, is tiredness a symptom that is clinically significant? How do you manage the problem? See if you can locate any evidence based or other guidelines.

Joint injections may provide temporary relief in severe arthritis.

Demonstrate on each other, or on models, how you would perform a range of joint injections (do not inject people though!) Do you have different approaches to the same joints? Why? Do some have particular advantages? How do patient factors contribute?

When considering joint pain, how do you reach a diagnosis? What are key features that lead you in a certain direction? Each consider and try to represent the process in a diagram (a decision tree format may work; the article by Stone may provide some hints about the things to consider). Compare all of your diagrams/decision trees. Consider the similarities and differences. What does this say about how you reason in clinical situations? Where might you make errors?

Practise examining each other to try to confirm or refute a diagnosis of fibromyalgia. Where are the spots? How hard should you press? What is pain compared to tenderness?

Domain 3 – Population health and the context of general practice

ICPC code: A99

Murtagh's safe diagnostic strategy (see the article by Knight) can provide a framework for general practice.

* Suggested learning activity: discuss as a group the diagnostic strategies you use and how this is relevant to a general practice population (eg. compared to a tertiary hospital patient population). If you are struggling to get started, perhaps think of a specific consultation or presentation, then consider what you would think about in a different population.

Domain 4 – Professional and ethical role

ICPC code: A99

Undifferentiated presentations place particular demands on general practitioners.

* Suggested learning activity: as a group discuss how you manage undifferentiated presentations, including how you experience the consultations, reflection and self care strategies.

Domain 5 – Organisational and legal dimensions

ICPC code: A99

Planning ahead can make most situations more manageable.

* Suggested learning activities:

As a group develop guidelines on investigation or management of a common undifferentiated presentation such as tiredness (the article by Harrison points out that most current guidelines are consensus based).

Develop a list of resources for patients with a particular condition, such as arthritis or chronic fatigue syndrome.