

The 5 Microskills of Clinical Teaching



UNC
HEALTH CARE

Office of Graduate Medical
Education

Use Effective Questioning as a primary teaching method

The principles behind effective questioning are simple:

- **the questions are designed to teach, not humiliate**
- **the questions are designed to allow the student to access their pre-existing knowledge**
- **the questions are structured to encourage a student to stretch themselves to new levels of understanding**
- **the questions should provide an opportunity to cement old knowledge, and acquire new knowledge within a framework that will allow them to apply that new knowledge to similar clinical situations in the future.**

One Method of Effective Questioning

The 5 Microskills model

5 “Microskills” Model of Clinical Teaching

1. **Get a commitment**
2. **Probe for supporting evidence**
3. **Teach general rules**
4. **Reinforce what was done right**
5. **Correct mistakes**

Neher JO, Gordon KC, Meyer B, Stevens
N. A five- step "microskills" model of
clinical teaching.

Journal of the American Board of Family Practice 1992; 5:419 -424

Microskills -- Step One: Get a Commitment

“What do you think is going on with this patient?”

“What would you like to do?”

Even a hunch or guess is better for learning than no commitment.

Microskills -- Step Two: Probe for Supporting Evidence

“What led you to that diagnosis?”

“Why did you choose that drug?”

Helps the teacher identify how the learner is applying knowledge to the actual clinical circumstances.

This line of questioning reinforces critical reasoning skills.

Avoid any tone that makes this confrontational or “pimping” in nature.

Microskills -- Step Three: Teach General Rules

“If the patient has cellulitis, incision and drainage won’t help. That’s for an abscess, which you recognize by fluctuance.”

This is an opportunity to provide “pearls” (e.g. when you see a young woman of childbearing age with abdominal pain, you always want to get a pregnancy test)

Can skip if learner already knows general principles.

Microskills -- Step Four: Reinforce What Was Done Right

“It was good that you considered the patient’s age when you prescribed that drug, because other drug classes can cause more side effects in the elderly.”

Some good actions are pure luck, others are more deliberate. In either case, skills in learners are not well established and are, therefore, "vulnerable." Unless reinforced, competencies may never be firmly established.

Microskills -- Step Five: Correct Mistakes

“You could be right that you won’t harm the brachial artery when you draw that blood gas. But if you use the radial artery, you won’t risk cutting off the arterial supply to the whole arm.”

- Have them self-critique first.**
- Be specific about what learner needs to correct.**
- Best done in private if criticism is major.**