

The Effective Use of Questioning in Clinical Teaching

Why do we ask our students questions?

- To find out what they know
- To understand how they think
- To assess their level of performance

The Three Levels of Questions

- Informational (asks for specific pieces of information)
- Applications (asks student to apply their knowledge to a specific situation)
- Problem-solving (asks for principles and creative answers to new ideas)

What are some examples of the three types of questions?

Teachers spend most of their time asking informational questions. Why do you think this is?

- Teachers need clinical information to deal with the clinical situation
- Teachers believe that a basic level of knowledge is required in clinical situations
- Informational questions get shorter answers – time is short!
- Teachers may not possess the skills to formulate higher level questioning

What sort of pitfalls can a teacher fall into?

- Creating an unpleasant (and therefore avoided) learning environment
- Providing information and ideas too readily to the learners
- Not leaving enough “wait-time” for student response
- Attending to the talker and forgetting the silent student

Effective strategies

- Plan key questions ahead of time
- Phrase questions clearly and specifically
- Adapt questions to learner’s needs and level
- Ask questions at a variety of levels in a group
- Avoid the “guess what I’m thinking” game
- Avoid answering your own question
- Direct questions to a group of learners – don’t stop with the first response
- Use questions to evaluate the learning experience
- Allow learners to question you

Dealing with learner responses

- Positive reinforcement – nod, smile, comment
- Probing question (when initial response isn’t enough or is incorrect)
- Justification question (e.g. why?)
- Clarification question
- Extension (request elaboration)
- Redirection (ask the same question of another learner)