

Teaching Clinical Reasoning

There is a rich ongoing debate about our understanding of the complex process of clinical diagnostic reasoning. At the risk of oversimplifying this process the following teaching approaches can be helpful.

Activity	Learning Outcome
Prompt the learner to reason aloud about the case	Provides the clinical teacher with insight into the learner's skill level
Ask open ended questions of the learner	As above
Prompt the learner to create a one-sentence summary of the case with the use of abstract terms	This will help the learner to organise information in a way that promotes clinical reason
Ask the learner to describe key features of case	Refer to the prototypical case to test the validity of the learner's reasoning
Force learners to prioritise the list of diagnostic possibilities and explain their justifications	This helps learners to create linkages between the clinical findings in the case and relevant diagnoses, bolstering their ability to develop pertinent "illness scripts".
Engage several learners at different levels (vertical integration) in a common discuss	This will help the novice to understand the complexity of the case
Teaching clinicians should reason aloud and create their own case summary highlighting the discriminating features	This forms a demonstration to learners of how to think about the case
Learners should read at least 2 diagnostic hypotheses at the same time , comparing and contrasting the similarities and discriminating features	Encourage reading that promotes conceptualisation rather than memorization. Avoid lists of facts in favour of a journal article that discusses a range of cases around the one clinical problem

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