

1. What do you expect of your doctor/receptionist/patient?
2. What does the doctor/patient/receptionist expect of you?
3. Do the physical surroundings of the surgery matter?
4. What were your expectations from your doctor/practice and have these expectations changed?
5. How do you see the differences between National Health Service and private treatment?
6. How will you/a patient complain? How would you/the patient express this?
7. Are expectations different in the care of children?
8. What was your training? (doctor/receptionist)
9. How do you know if the patient is satisfied? (doctor/receptionist)
10. How do you see the role of doctor in the community?

The interview was recorded and later transcribed. The transcripts were then analysed. A total of 31 patients, 12 receptionists and 13 doctors were interviewed in four different group practices. To question 4 about expectations, there was a marked mismatch. Doctors and their receptionists thought that patients wanted to be cured and made better. Seventy per cent of all patients however, mentioned that they wanted to be listened to and taken seriously. It seems that patients were more interested in the process than the outcome. Interestingly, patients were right about what they thought doctors expected of them.

Receptionists tended to follow their doctor's views of patient expectations. However, no doctor had thought about what the receptionist expected of him; all the receptionists thought they wanted more support from the doctor. No patient thought that they had any responsibility to the receptionists, but receptionists expected patients to know the system and to abide by it.

There is other indirect evidence to suggest that patients think of the process of the medical encounter as equally or more important than the outcome. Klein in his book on patient complaints found that a high percentage of the complaints concerned the process of the medical encounter.¹³ Recently a patient sued an obstetrician and won her case — she is reported to have said afterwards that she only sued because he did not say he was sorry.

We believe that as part of the quality initiative each practice should discover for itself (preferably using outside help) what its patients and staff expect. It may also be important to explain to patients what staff and doctors expect of them.

Such an exercise has educational benefit — it will also benefit patient care and

satisfaction should be improved to the benefit of all.

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Monitoring of chronic disease

Sir,
In his address to the College Spring Meeting in 1985, the then Chairman, Donald Irvine, rightly stressed the importance of the general practitioner's role in chronic disease. Diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, asthma and rheumatoid arthritis provide a large part of this workload. In monitoring these conditions I have found the need for a flow chart. Previously drug companies used to supply cards for hypertension, which I adapted for use in other diseases. However, this source has now ceased, and I have designed a universal flow chart, which Duphar Laboratories Ltd kindly printed for me. The front gives patient details and lists some investigations which

are particularly useful in hypertension and diabetes. The reverse side (Figure 1) is the real flow chart, and should provide parameters to measure and record in all the chronic diseases mentioned. It can be adapted for other measurements such as blood urea and thyroid functions.

The card has been in use in my practice for the past six months, and few snags have arisen. The weight scale in stones does not show small differences very clearly, but by using kilograms these differences can be enlarged.

I wish to encourage other practices to use these cards which are intended for Lloyd George envelopes, although no doubt larger A4 sheets could be designed. They extract information which gets lost in the narrative of the continuation cards, as well as giving a much clearer picture of changes in the important measurements in chronic disease.

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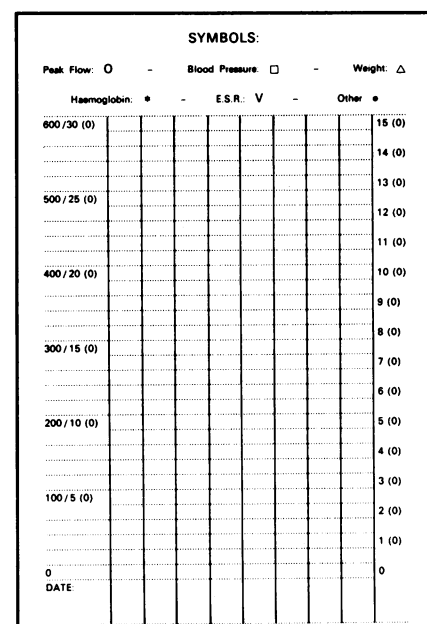


Figure 1. Reverse side of universal flow chart.

Characteristics of medical students wanting to become general practitioners

Sir,
We wish to present some data on the characteristics of medical students seeking a career in general practice compared with those opting for other specialities.

As part of a study into the development of student attitudes towards a career in psychiatry,¹ 498 students in six medical schools completed a questionnaire which included questions on respondents' sex,