



Family Issues

<i>Key Feature</i>	<i>Skill</i>	<i>Phase</i>
1 Routinely ask about family issues to understand their impact on the patient's illness and the impact of the illness on the family.	<i>Patient-centred Approach</i>	<i>History</i>
2 Ask about family issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • periodically • at important life-cycle points (e.g., when children move out, after the birth of a baby) • when faced with problems not resolving in spite of appropriate therapeutic interventions (e.g. medication compliance, fibromyalgia, hypertension) 	<i>Patient-centred Approach</i> <i>Clinical Reasoning</i>	<i>Hypothesis generation</i> <i>History</i>

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Objective 1:

- 1 Routinely ask about family issues to understand their impact on the patient's illness and the impact of the illness on the family.

Remember FIFE? The first skill you learned in medical school, alongside taking a blood pressure (which is becoming obsolete with automated BP monitors..).

FIFE is key.

- Feelings,
- ideas,
- fears,
- expectations.

This is important to pull out when a new diagnosis emerges for a patient, as well as throughout the course of the illness and especially with any sudden changes. Use open-ended questions to inquire periodically about family issues. In some cases, family issues may not be directly related to the patient's medical condition but could be causing them significant stress or could affect their treatment. It may take some sleuthing to sort out how much of an impact an illness has on family dynamics, but leaving inviting pauses during a patient's visit is a good place to start. Some treatment plans are easily managed by the patient themselves and others, such as quitting smoking or a new diagnosis of cancer, require effort from the whole family.



Objective 2:

2 Ask about family issues

- periodically
- at important life-cycle points (e.g., when children move out, after the birth of a baby)
- when faced with problems not resolving in spite of appropriate therapeutic interventions (e.g. medication compliance, fibromyalgia, hypertension)

|Like the objective says, ask about family issues. At a variety of occurrences, or life-cycle points. These include children moving away from home, moving in with a partner, starting a family, and retirement, which are all expected stressors that can exacerbate health issues. At these various points, all that's really needed is a listening ear and some emotional support to ease them around the corner into their next cycle. And if the life cycle involves challenges with medical therapies, sometimes an encouraging pep talk will do the trick.

That's really all for this issue! No need to blab on when it's straightforward and simple. Hope this podcast hangs out in your head like an earworm and reminds you to check in on your patients' families when you get the chance.

Thanks for tuning in, see you next time on the Generehlist podcast!