



Integrated Community Clerkships (ICC) Breakfast Club Series, September 17, 2024

Student in Difficulty

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Key Concepts

- Third year is a huge transition time of growth for students - from book-learning to clinical learning – and is the biggest year of personal growth in all of their medical training
- As preceptors and site directors we have a huge mentorship role to play during this transition, which often persists as they move on to residency and into their careers
- The challenges of clinical learning (for e.g. time management, prioritization, interpersonal relationships while working in a clinical team, and undifferentiated clinical presentations) can uncover previously undiagnosed learning challenges, neurodevelopmental conditions (ADHD, Autism) and mental health conditions

For Preceptors - Best Practices

1) Communicate with your site director at the first ‘head tilt’! (hmm...what is happening here)

As preceptors we are particularly skilled in recognizing when a student’s performance or professional behavior is out of the ordinary. Bring these “head-turn” moments, large or small, to the attention of the site director – they may not act upon it immediately, but it is important that they are aware because they may know of related concerns.

2) Document the facts by writing an email to yourself, using objective, neutral language!

It’s important and helpful to keep a record of the details of these ‘hmm’ moments, so that you can reflect on them later in assessments and conversations. Focus on when and what you noticed, noting the exact words that were said and the context of the moment, not your interpretation.

3) Involve the student in the conversation!

- Clinical progress/mid-rotation assessments are an important starting point for student growth and feedback and should be framed as such. Fill out the form with the specifics of what you’ve noticed (reference your documentation), and then discuss them with your student.
- Students may understandably feel compelled to defend specific aspects of negative feedback. Reframe the conversation to the greater theme that requires support. You and the student may not agree on what was perceived, but you may be able to agree that these are areas where the student can grow.
- Emailing a summary of the conversation to yourself and the student can also provide transparency, allowing you both to confirm action items and correct any inaccuracies in the documentation.
- Consider emailing a summary of the conversation to your site director as well after the student has reviewed.

4) Remember – noting your concern does not fail the student!

As preceptors, regardless of years of experience, we can feel nervous about addressing learner difficulties. It’s important to accurately assess a student’s competence mid-rotation – this does not fail them, and there is plenty of time before the end-of-rotation assessment for students to



address these concerns. Keep in mind that you are not alone in this experience, and to reach out to your site directors and colleagues for advice!

For Site Directors - Best Practices

1) As soon as you hear a concern, take it very seriously.

- Be very intentional about documentation. Note the date and as much detail as you can – document specific phrases or quotations from the preceptor, in an objective fashion and without interpretation (similar to a clinical note).
- Document all conversations you have with preceptors about students with potential flags as soon as possible after the conversation, regardless of what setting the conversation happened in – i.e. in the hallway, on the phone, in your office.

2) **Reassure the preceptor.** Tell them that you appreciate their insight, that you are there to assist and help them frame how to address their concerns with the student. Reassure them that they are not ultimately responsible for passing or failing a student.

3) Discretely gather appropriate collateral information.

4) Site directors should **reach out to the ICC Program Director early in the process to keep them aware of potential concerns.** Other site directors and the regional assistant deans are also additional sources of support.

Academic Advising

A confidential mix of consolation/accompaniment with advice on study strategies.

- A struggling learner may be suffering a crisis of confidence and belonging, so practice trauma informed teaching, moving from ‘what’s wrong with you?’ “to what happened in that rotation/clinic/relationship?”
- Check for learner’s insight on preceptor(s) perspectives
- Ask about and consider potential learning difficulties
- Explore current study strategies and nudge toward active learning principles, including collaborative learning, multi-media sources in the parallel curriculum such as podcasts, and MUCH self-testing
- Provide resource links (see below)

Resources

- UBC Policy on Students in Difficulty ([004b](#))
- [Student Accommodations Procedure \(Policy 033\)](#)
- [Student Affairs](#) – encourage students to access, their supports are multifaceted!
 - **NEW:** UBC MDUP-specific counseling! Email at md.counsellor@ubc.ca or [find the Calendly links for counsellors on Entrada](#) to book directly.
- Academic Advising
 - ([Policy 015](#)) – reassure students that conversations are confidential
 - Active learning explained by [The Learning Scientists](#)
 - UBC provides some free case-based learning in their [databases](#)
 - [Podcast list hosted on Dropbox](#)
 - Self-testing resources: Q banks and apps are mostly proprietary (unfortunately)



- Background information on ADHD and Autism:
 - This Changed My Practice, “[Adult ADHD - Practice Tip](#)”
 - This Changed My Practice, “[Women with ADHD - Practice Tips](#)”
 - [Understanding attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder in physicians: workplace implications and management strategies](#) by Maryna Mammoliti, MD, Christopher Richards-Bentley, MD, Adam Ly, MScOT, and Mary Nguyen, MD – CJPL Vol 7 no 4. <https://doi.org/10.37964/cr24742>
 - [Professional Stigmatizations](#) by Dr. Shane Neilson - CMAJ October 15, 2024 196 (34) E1173-E1175; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.241029>
 - CMAJ Podcasts – Breaking the Mold: embracing neurodiversity in medicine – Dr. Shane Neilson. [Webpage](#) and [Spotify Link](#)