

The Patient- Centered Continuum (PCC) Curriculum Case Study

The PCC case study is a means of integrating basic science, clinical science and social medicine topics. The exact balance varies according to:

- the topic of the case itself
- the level of the student
- the complexity of the case (i.e., multiple diagnoses)

No single case can cover every aspect of a medical problem. Remember a case could easily last for an entire quarter. The reality is that certain topics need to be included in the student's learning program.

Cases are written to ensure coverage of certain topics depending on the quarter or year. Therefore the rule of thumb should be to bring a case to closure within a reasonable amount of time (e.g. within 2 weeks for a "one week" case). Most paper cases will be worked through in 3-5 sessions.

The PCC cases are based on actual patients, with the patient information distributed over several pages. The facilitators will present the information progressively during the group discussion, in a sequence similar to that available to the physician.

- The first page, for instance, contains only the information available to the physician at the beginning of the visit: name, sex, age, and chief complaint.
- The subsequent pages provide data that will answer the probable questions concerning patient history, physical exam, results of laboratory tests, and ultimately, diagnosis and treatment.
- The process attempts to emulate the interaction between physician and patient in the course of exploring the problem presented by the patient.
- Students are stimulated to generate questions, ideas, and hypotheses which will help them address specific clinical situations.
- Facilitators provide the information students request without attempting to "correct" students' direction of inquiry, but allowing for a free exploration of alternatives in the process of solving the patient problem.

The ultimate goal of the discussion is not the solution of the problem per se, but to identify learning issues students need to address in order to arrive at that solution. Although the discussion is based on a clinical case, students do not need to be concerned with making a diagnosis or selecting the treatment for the patient. The objective is to help students understand the basic mechanisms responsible for clinical signs and symptoms.