

## Teaching physical examination skills

The didactic portion of the physical examination curriculum is provided as a web-based curriculum. Students are expected to complete the relevant web-based learning module **before** attending the small group session where the skills were learned and practice. Each web-based learning module also includes a video of the exam.

Although we expect you to teach the students the “UVA” exam, as encoded into the individual OSCE sheets, this does not prevent you from sharing pearls gleaned from your experience – we encourage you to do this.

In general, when you teach a physical exam session, we ask that you:

- demonstrate the exam, using the OSCE form, on a group volunteer
- allow for questions following the demonstration before students split up
- students should spend some time examining each other, with Mentors circulating to answer questions
- bring the group back together to answer questions and to review sections of the exam that were not performed well.

We believe that the non-physician Mentor has an important role to play in teaching physical diagnosis. The website demonstrations and learning modules, the textbook, and examination checklists (OSCE's) will allow you to familiarize yourself with the conduct of the physical exam. We do not expect you to teach a student how to perform a physical exam. We do want you to help students learn to examine patients in a manner that is caring, respectful, and attentive to patient's needs. We want you to help the student learn to weave appropriate communication skills into their physical examination. For example, you can help students learn to:

- clearly explain the examination to the patient – what is the student doing, what can the patient expect to experience?
- attend to patient comfort and anxiety – check in periodically with patient, continue to observe for non-verbal cues from patient
- clearly explain findings of exam to patient as exam progresses.

Since available clinic space for teaching is at such a premium, the majority of the physical exam sessions will take place in your conference rooms. We will provide mats and any other materials that will be necessary to “transform” these rooms into examination spaces. During sessions that deal with potentially sensitive body areas (thorax and abdomen), the students can be split into single gender groups. Discuss this issue with your students – not all groups will feel a need to be split up, others will. In the event that your group is split into men and women for some physical exam practice, the physician Mentor must be sure to attend to the learning needs of both groups.

# Checklist: Demonstrating Technical Skills

When introducing new skills:



- Tell the learners what you intend to do and what you expect of them
- Introduce the patient and assure that he or she is comfortable (if a patient is involved)
- Present an overview of the skill you are demonstrating
- Break complex skills into their component parts
- Describe aloud what you are doing
- Make sure that all learners can see and hear all aspects of the demonstration
- Do the demonstration at an appropriate pace
- Alert the learners to common mistakes and safety issues
- Provide handouts, if appropriate
- Encourage questions during and after the demonstration
- Review and clarify any steps that appear to confuse the learners
- Make sure that all the learners feel they know how to start doing the skill
- Invite the patient's comments on how to make the exam or procedure most comfortable, if appropriate

**Give the learners opportunities to practice the skills under supervision as soon as possible after the demonstration**