

Postgraduate examinations in Family Medicine/Primary Care may involve written papers, multiple choice questions (MCQs), modified essay questions (MEQs), interviews, practicals and objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE).

A patient-centred clinical approach and the theory of patient-centred care will be needed in parts of the examination.

A method of measuring Patient-Centredness in a consultation has been developed and has been tested in a number of situations with positive results.

Examiners observe the candidate during a consultation or a video of a consultation that the doctor has conducted in his own practice.

The "offers" that the patient makes such as symptoms and verbal communications are recorded by the examiners. These may be accompanied by gestures, body postures, silences, emotional outcries etc. The patient may express thoughts, feelings or expectations both verbally and non verbally.

The doctor is scored on whether he ignores these "offers" or is open to them. Positive, negative or neutral responses which help or preventing a further exploration of the offer may be measured.

He may also answer with a "closed response" either by a direct "medical" answer that shuts off interaction or follows with another "closed question" in an interrogatory way.

Points are awarded for "open responses" where time is given for the patient to speak with a minimum of interruptions and for open-ended statements such as "tell me more etc".

Points are also awarded for specific facilitation of the patient's thoughts, feelings and expectations by helping the patient express them via encouragement and empathy eg "you look upset", "What did you think, feel, expect etc?".

This is a new and developing and controversial area of examination in family medicine.

Contributors to this Section:

CME Editor. Dr Chris Ellis.
Editor. South African Family Practice.
Professor Sam Fehrsen.
Editor. South African Family Practice Manual.
Dr Manfred Teichler.

Contributors have helped in various gestational stages and with various parts of this section.

Professor Ron Henbest,
Department of Family Medicine, Medunsa,
Dr Roy Jobson, Menlo Park, Pretoria,
Professor Dorian Haarhof, University of Namibia.