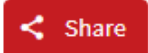


Conducting a nurse consultation

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Published Online: 27 Sep 2013 | <https://doi.org/10.12968/bjca.2011.6.9.433>



Abstract

Until recently it was doctors who patients saw for consultations in the outpatients department of hospitals or in general practice. Over the past three decades there has been a dramatic rise in the number of specialist nurses within the health-care setting i.e. the development of the consultant nurse, advanced nurse practitioner and clinical nurse specialist. Many of these roles have evolved in response to the developments in medical care and the advancement of medical technology.

The success of the nurse consultation depends not only on the clinician's clinical knowledge and interview skills but also on the nature of the relationship that exists between the nurse and patient. Increasing emphasis is now being placed on communication skills alongside history taking in postgraduate courses for nurses to enhance the nurse-patient relationship and promote more effective consultations. How nurses portray themselves is just as important as what they say. The patient needs to feel sufficiently at ease during the consultation to disclose any problems and express any concerns. The patient also needs to reach a shared understanding with the nurse about the nature of any illness, any investigations planned and what treatment is proposed to deal with it. As well as being more supportive for patients, good communication skills make taking the patient's history more accurate and effective.