National Healthcare Communication Programme

GATHERING INFORMATION

CALGARY-CAMBRIDGE GUIDE

Making conversations easier

Explore patient's problems

- **Encourage patient to tell their story.** Questions designed to collect patient perspectives should be open-ended questions using the words "*what*" or "*how*" instead of those that can be answered with "*yes*" or "*no*".

- **Move from open ended to closed questions:** Focused and closed questions can be used to dig deeper, wind down a discussion and finalise options.

- **Listen attentively without interrupting.** Maintain good eye contact as this encourages the patient to continue speaking. Silence allows time for the patient to collect their thoughts

- **Pick up any non-verbal cues:** Facial expression, body language and verbal tone can give you clues about how the patient is feeling and what they are thinking.

- **Facilitate patient's responses verbally and non-verbally:** *Non-Verbal* - Attentive body language (e.g., open posture, eye contact, and interested expression), eliciting verbal (e.g., "*uh-huh*" and "*I see*") and non-verbal (e.g., nodding) encouragement, and keeping questions to a minimum demonstrates a genuine interest in the patient.

  Verbal - Paraphrasing what they patient has said to you and repeating it back to them shows that you have listened and understood. It also helps to ensure your interpretation of the information is correct, clarify any ambiguity and gives the patient an opportunity to hear what they have said and reflect on it.

- **Language:** use easy to understand language, avoid or explain jargon.

Understand the patient's perspective

To understand the patient's perspective you should try to establish what the patient is thinking. The ICE acronym is often used to establish the patient's perspective.

I. Ideas

What can the patient tell you about their problem? "*Why do you think this has happened?*".

C. Concerns

Sometimes a patient may have concerns that you have not considered. "*Is there anything in particular that is worrying you?*".

E. Expectations

What does the patient think might happen? "*What do you think might be the best way forward?*".

Adapted From: Kurtz, S., Silverman, J., & Draper, J. (2005). Teaching and Learning Communication Skills in Medicine (2nd ed). Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing Silverman, J., Kurtz, S., & Draper, J. (2013). Skills for Communicating With Patients (3rd ed). Oxford: Radcliffe Publishing.