

# TOPs

## Trust Observation Pairs

Improving medical student education without  
increasing faculty time

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# Reflection is Essential



# TOPs Goals

- Minimize faculty time demand
- Maximize student learning
- Increase student self assessment
- Practice communication skills in the early phase of the visit

# Background Theory

- Physicians are missing core communication skills, eg, agenda setting
- Barriers to learning
  - perception of not enough time
  - Inarticulate teachers- e.g., “good bedside manner”)
- Skill differentiation precedes integration
- Practice is essential
- Reflection is essential

# Why is peer observation effective?

- Regularly observing and naming

important skills and then immediately

practicing them with feedback is the *sina*

*qua non* of skill development.

# Course Design- During Intersession

- Students work in pairs, as “physician” and as “observer”
- 3-6 patients/day
- Students give one another feedback in breaks between patients
- Students discuss TOPs with preceptor, when time allows

# Why is this design more efficient?

One preceptor works with two students seeing one patient together, rather than:

- One preceptor working with two students seeing two separate patients; or
- Two preceptors working with two students seeing two separate patients

# TOPs Intersession Prep for Students

- Students use this tutorial to become familiar with:
  - TOPs design and curriculum
  - Peer learning and giving feedback
  - Time management
- Students view 60 min Patient Centered Observation Form online tutorial
  - [www.pcof.us](http://www.pcof.us)

# Faculty Preparation

- Use this tutorial to become familiar with:
  - TOPs design and benefit
  - Precepting tips
    - Teaching options for interested faculty
  - Time management
- Optional online training
  - [www.pcof.us](http://www.pcof.us)

# TOPs Design

- Students and faculty meet before clinic to identify best patients
  - Aim for 2 or 3 per half day
  - Patients who are willing to see students
  - Not overly complex patients
- Students see patient, precept, and all three finish encounter
- Students discuss patients between and after selected patients

# TOPs Design, con't

- Students practice these skills sequentially
  - Rapport
  - Collaborative upfront agenda setting
  - Gathering information
  - Communication during physical exams
- “Observer” uses the PCOF
- Students take the interaction as far as they can and then precept with faculty

# Direct Observation: Logistics

Orienting  
patients

Activity in  
the room

Feedback  
and  
Reflection

# Orienting Patients

Faculty example:

Students are observing one another today to give each other feedback and learn excellent patient care. Is it OK if they see you before I join in?

# Orienting Patients

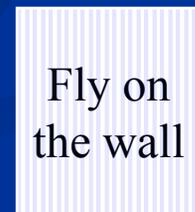
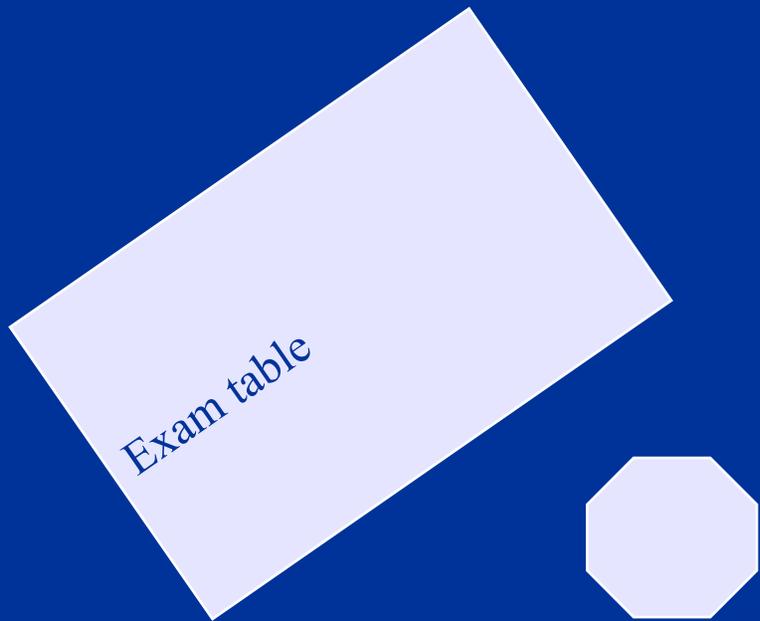
Student example:

We are observing one another today to give each other feedback and improve our skills. My partner will sit over there and just be a fly on the wall?

# Activity in the room

Counter

Student



Door

# Observer Behavior During Interview

Avoid upstaging interviewer non verbal behavior, e.g., head nodding, non verbal empathy

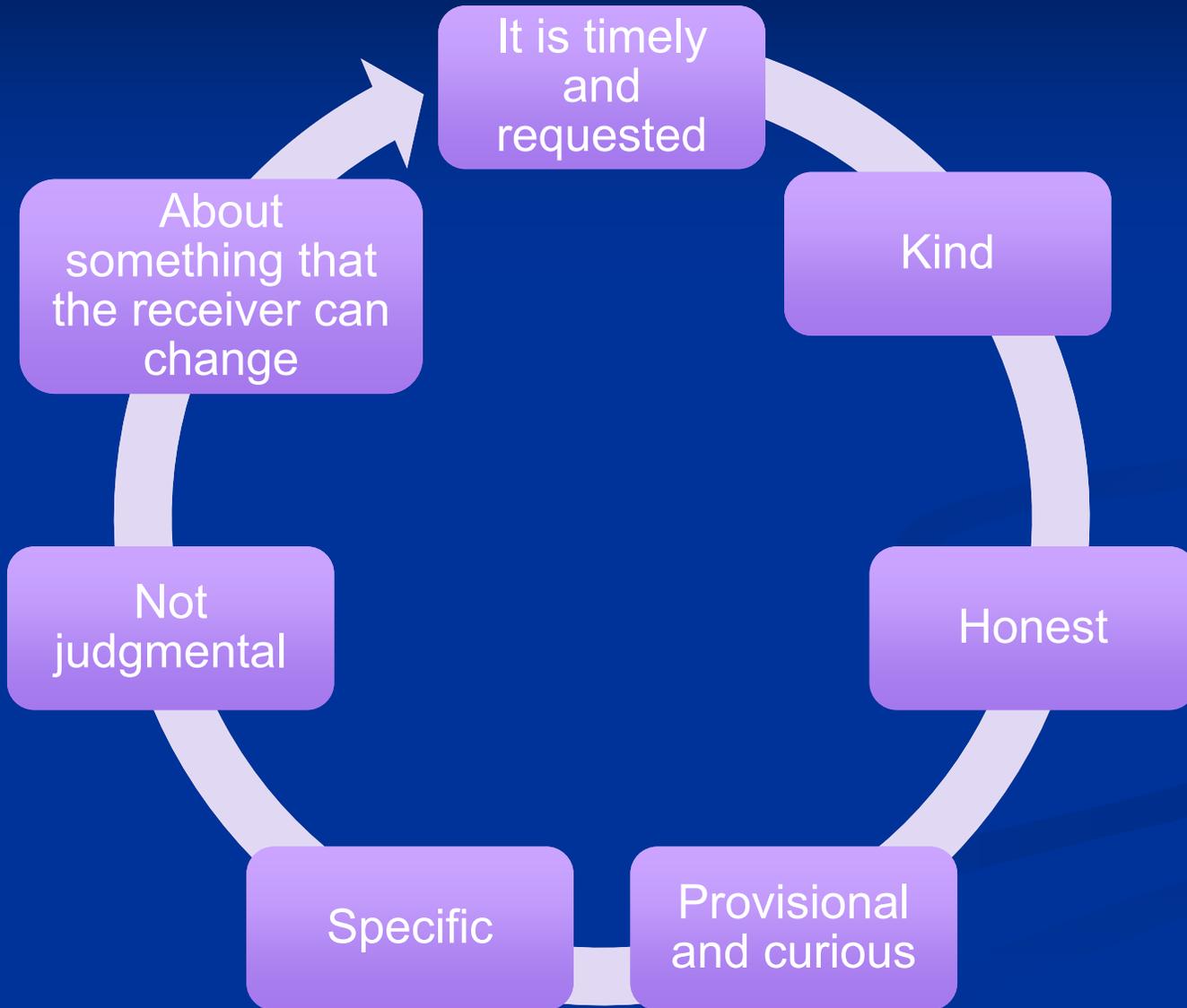
If patient speaks to you, look at” the interviewer” or at the floor, your paper. Avoid being included in the conversation

Never interrupt

If interviewer leaves the room:

- Engage patient in brief conversation or respond to patient questions but be careful not to undermine the interviewer, or
- Leave with interviewer

# Giving Feedback



# Peer Feedback

Used for reciprocal coaching, problem solving and support

Structured observation (checklists) important

Should not be used for high stakes purposes

Being the observer may be as valuable as being the person being observed

# Time Management Tips

- Plan which patients to see ahead of time
- Faculty and students agree on how much time students can take with patients
- Faculty should prioritize collecting pertinent clinical information and then,
  - Teach what seems most appropriate
  - Postpone inquiring about TOPs until time permits

# Time Management

## Tips con't

- Students should remain sensitive to faculty time demands
- Look for protected educational time with
  - Peer student
  - With faculty

# Faculty Optional Teaching Strategies

- View online PCOF training [www.pcof.us](http://www.pcof.us)
- Ask students about salient TOPs learning
- During precepting, ask student for patient's prioritized agenda
- Ask students what they want to improve
- Discuss questions about PCOF communication skills when time allows

# Evaluation

## ■ Students

- Benefits
- Top 3 learning takeaways
- Challenges
- Number of patients (total as clinician and observer)

## ■ Faculty

- Benefits
- Top 3 learning takeaways
- Challenges

# Quote from Former POVE Student

“I believed ...other than your knowledge base, how you relate to patients is the most important part of medicine. I saw doctors who were really good at it, but it was difficult to pinpoint exactly why or how they do what they do...”

# Quote from Former POVE Student, con't

“I feel like I compressed years of experience by trial and error of how to communicate and negotiate with patients into one month, and as a result have a tremendous jumpstart on these skills as I will be entering my residency.”

