

Reflection based on the ‘What happened, what did you do, what have you learnt, what next’? - Reflective logs (Example 2)

Learning Log – ‘A good event’

Subject title: GP Clinic: Female Sterilisation (practising holistically, medical complexity)

What happened?

35-year-old mother attended GP clinic with two young children. She was due to have a female sterilisation procedure in a few days’ time. She had been advised during the pre-assessment clinic to see her GP due to a positive urine dip and high clinic blood pressure result.

She expressed her desperation to have the sterilisation procedure as she just could not cope with having any more children.

What did you do?

I attempted to manage her case as usual, explaining that we would need to treat the probable urinary tract infection prior to obtaining a series of home blood pressure monitoring results. Whilst talking to her I realised that her youngest child, a girl in a pushchair appeared to have a physical disability. At this point I felt it was important to ask about how things were going at home. I allowed her time over the next few minutes to voice her frustrations. She explained how her life now revolves around a series of hospital appointments for her daughter and that she has had urinary tract symptoms for the past four weeks but has just not had any time to look after herself. As well as providing the necessary clinical advice, I took extra time in the consultation to provide some self-help advice and book a follow up appointment that would fit in with her busy schedule. She was extremely appreciative.

The next day one of the reception staff approached me to explain that the patient had voiced her thanks and appreciation following my consultation. She said that I had an excellent bedside manner. As I had just started working in the practice it was extremely satisfying to have positive feedback early on.

What did you learn?

Looking beyond the presenting problem and considering a holistic approach to caring for patients is key. Picking up on subtle clues about a patient’s social circumstance and taking time to ask about and understand their perspective is extremely important. In this patient’s case her untreated urinary tract infection and high blood pressure were probably secondary to her hectic lifestyle caring for young children.

What next / what will you do differently in future?

In future consultations I will take extra care to looking beyond the obvious presenting complaint. Getting to know about my patient’s home circumstances will not only make me a more effective general practitioner, but it will also make my role more enjoyable and rewarding.