The Art of Questioning
Contributed by Tyler Mains, MSIII

Checking for understanding is a critical component of teaching, but it can be a difficult skill to master. How does one accurately assess a learner’s knowledge without discouraging the learner? Furthermore, effective questions can provide learning opportunities. Below are a few strategies you may want to incorporate into your questioning:

**Align:** Review the objectives for the clerkship/rotation and ask questions that will assess those skills and knowledge base. Of course, pushing learners to the next level is appropriate, but ensure they understand the basics first!

**Scaffold:** If a learner answers a question correctly, ask a more difficult question or ask the learner to explain his/her reasoning. If a learner answers incorrectly, ask a related question to help the learner think through the concept. Alternatively, ask an open-ended question like “Tell me what you know about…” and fill in any knowledge gaps.

**Reassess:** When a learner answers a question incorrectly, always follow-up with them later to ensure he/she learned the key point. For instance, you might say “Remember to review this tonight because I’m going to ask you tomorrow.” And then don’t forget to ask tomorrow!

**Rephrase:** Sometimes a learner may know the answer, but there is a misunderstanding about what you’re asking. Think about the key concept you’re assessing and ask the question in a new way. Sometimes we unintentionally play “guess what I am thinking!”

**Use peers:** If you are working with multiple learners and one doesn’t know the answer, ask if they want to “phone a friend”. If you do this, always go back to the initial learner and ask a related question to ensure he/she mastered the material. Do not ask the same question to a learner on the “same rung” as this can be awkward between peers!

**Encourage:** The term “pimping” has created a negative culture of questioning throughout medical training. By letting learners know they can ask questions when they’re confused and that answering some questions incorrectly is not only acceptable but expected, you can create a welcoming learning environment.

Ultimately, checking for understanding is a powerful educational tool if used skillfully. The most effective learning takes place when students feel equally challenged and supported, and educators can create that environment with great questioning.

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**MEDICAL STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- **What Does an Ob/Gyn Do?** Chance for MS1/MS2 to see the diversity of our field!!! Hands on sessions on laparoscopy, knot tying and much more…December 10th 5:30 - 8:30pm email Rebecca Slattery (rslatte1@jhmi.edu)
- **Knot tying session:** October 21, 2013 1-3pm or 3-5pm (rslatte1@jhmi.edu)
- **Communicating Uncertainty/Breaking Bad News; a joint exercise with Pediatrics:** November 18th 10a - 12 (rslatte1@jhmi.edu)
- **Shortness of Breath in Pregnancy:** November 19th 1-3pm or 3-5pm (rslatte1@jhmi.edu)

**RESIDENT OPPORTUNITIES**

- **Ambulatory Gynecology Series:** bread and butter topics for residents - email Dr. Silka Patel (spatel87@jhmi.edu) for more details!
Meet your Education Division!!

This Month in the Spotlight

Residency Program Site Directors
- Bayview Medical Center: Dr. Betty Chou
- GBMC: Dr. Ed Tanner
- Howard County: Dr. Margot Watson

Medical Student Clerkship Site Directors
- Bayview Medical Center: Dr. Silka Patel
- GBMC: Dr. Ed Tanner
- Sinai Hospital: Dr. Julie Jacobstein

Medical Student Selective Directors
- FPMRS: Dr. Grace Chen (JHBMC) and Dr. Daniel Kim (Sinai)
- Gynecology Ambulatory Subspecialties: Dr. July Lee (JHH/GSS)
- Gynecology Oncology: Dr. Ed Tanner (JHH/GBMC) and Dr. Fouad Abbas (Sinai)
- Maternal Fetal Medicine: Dr. Janice Henderson (JHH) and Dr. Pedro Arrabal (Sinai)
- REI: Dr. Farah Chuong (JHH/GSS)
- Family Planning: Dr. Michelle Fox (JHBMC/JHH)
- GynOb Pathology: Dr. Russell Vang & Dr. Robert Kurman (JHH)
- Women’s Mood Disorders: Dr. Jennifer Payne (JHH)

Site Coordinators
- Bayview Medical Center: Vicky Wisniewski
- GBMC: Carolyn Brice
- Sinai: Mary Kennedy

Fellowship Directors
- REI: Dr. Howard Zacur
- MFM: Dr. Ernest Graham
- FPMRS: Dr. Victoria Hands
- Gynecology Oncology: Dr. Fancis Grumbine
- Family Planning: Dr. Ann Burke

Welcome New Fellows!

We hope your first few months have allowed you to ease into your new roles. It is great to have you as part of our educational team. Trying to balance your own educational needs with that of the residents/medical students is challenging but remember being able to teach a skill is a true sign of mastery!

MFM: Clark Johnson, MD, Arthur “Jason” Vaught, MD
REI: Farah Chuong, MD
FPMRS: Chandhana Paka, MD
GynOnc: Abdulrahman “Abed” Sinno, MD
FP: Natalie Whaley, MD

On Going Educational Scholarship

Congrats to the following faculty and residents for their continued contribution to educational scholarship!
If you have any projects you are working on or that have been accepted let us know!

- Dr. Jessica Bienstock Chair and Lead Author on the New ACGME Ob/Gyn Milestones Document that is a key piece of the Next Accreditation System (NAS)
- “Heal Thy Learner: Burnout Prevention and Management Boot Camp” Drs. Shari Lawson, Betty Chou & Dayna Burrell. APGO Faculty Development Meeting
- “Physician, Heal Thyself: Promoting Wellness from Within” Dr. Shari Lawson. APGO Faculty Development Meeting
- “Creating a 5min Teaching Timeout: Collecting a String of Teaching Pearls” Drs. Silka Patel, Betty Chou and Nancy Hueppchen. APGO Faculty Development Meeting
- “How do you solve a problem like Maria?” Medical Students with Non-Cognitive Difficulties. Drs. Nancy Hueppchen, John Dairymple, Nadine Katz. APGO Faculty Development Meeting

Questions/Comments/Ideas contact Dr. Silka Patel spatel87@jhmi.edu

Next Edition: January 2014
- Tips from the Chair’s chair
- Teaching Communication Strategies
- Service Expectations
- Giving Learners feedback

A special thanks to all of the people that work hard creating and implementing educational programs for all of our learners! We know that all members of the department fulfill this important role and as a result our department becomes stronger!