A Structured Approach to Medical Problem-solving

(1) What problems or questions do I need to address for/with this patient?

(2) Given these problems or questions, what are the possible conditions that could be causing the patient’s symptoms? Why would I include these or not?

(3) What do I need to know and how should I go about finding out? Are there other things about the patient’s situation I should consider?

(4) Given what I know now, how does this new knowledge help me differentiate from among the possible diagnoses? What can I rule in or rule out? Why or why not? What else do I need to know?

(5) Now that I have concluded this encounter or clinical situation, what did I do well and why? What could I have done better? How? What should I do next time to improve my approach to this process or clinical encounters in general?

The purpose of this structured approach is to help you:

- Systematically apply reasoning to clinical problems
- Re-evaluate evidence, inferences and assumptions
- Identify and acknowledge cognitive errors
- Develop strategies for avoiding error in future cases.
Post-case Reflections

Case

- WHAT you learned
- Medical knowledge or scientific concepts learned or appreciated

Process

- HOW you approached the case
- HOW you gathered & applied information
- Comparing approaches
- Recognizing error

Self-guidance

- SYNTHEIS of problem-solving skills learned, behaviors improved or errors recognized over time
- SELF-ADVICE for IMPROVING approach to problem-solving

Progress

- Recognizing & describing PROGRESS and/or CHALLENGES in developing skills, behaviors, or attitudes for effective problem-solving

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