

Inquiry Strategies for a Reflective Approach to Medical Problem-solving

Question the Process

- How do I know that?
- What else do I need to know?
- How could/should I find out?
- How will it help me to differentiate from among the possible diagnoses?
- Is there another approach I/we can take?
- Are these problems due to a single cause? Multiple causes? Multiple related causes?
- How can I/we narrow POSSIBLE causes to highly PLAUSIBLE or PROBABLE causes?

Question the Case

- Are these problems due to a single cause? Multiple causes? Multiple related causes?
- Which facts support my conclusions?
- Which facts do not support my conclusions? Should this cause me to continue investigating? Why? Why not?

Question Perspectives

- Have I/we framed the inquiry in a way that helps or hinders us from reaching a conclusion supported by evidence?
- How could I/we (re)frame the problem?
- How could I/we reframe the question?
- Am I/are we biased in some way?
- What assumptions am I/are we making?
- What kind of questions should I/we be asking?

Question How to Approach Future Cases

- What have I learned from my approach in past cases?
- How can problem-solving in past cases help me take an effective approach to the current case?
- Have I/we made any cognitive errors? What are they?
- How/why did I/we make those errors?
- How/why could I/we avoid these in future cases?



A Structured Approach to Medical Problem-solving

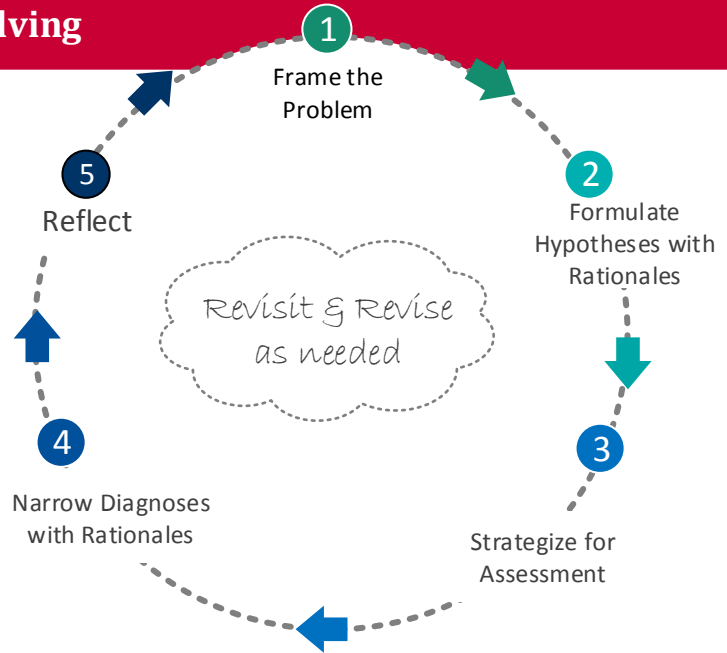
(1) What problems or questions do I need to address for/with this patient?

(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
- Identify and acknowledge cognitive errors
- Re-evaluate evidence, inferences and assumptions
- Develop strategies for avoiding error in future cases.



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