

## Clinical Teaching [HPEC Fast Facts]

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## HPEC Fast Facts

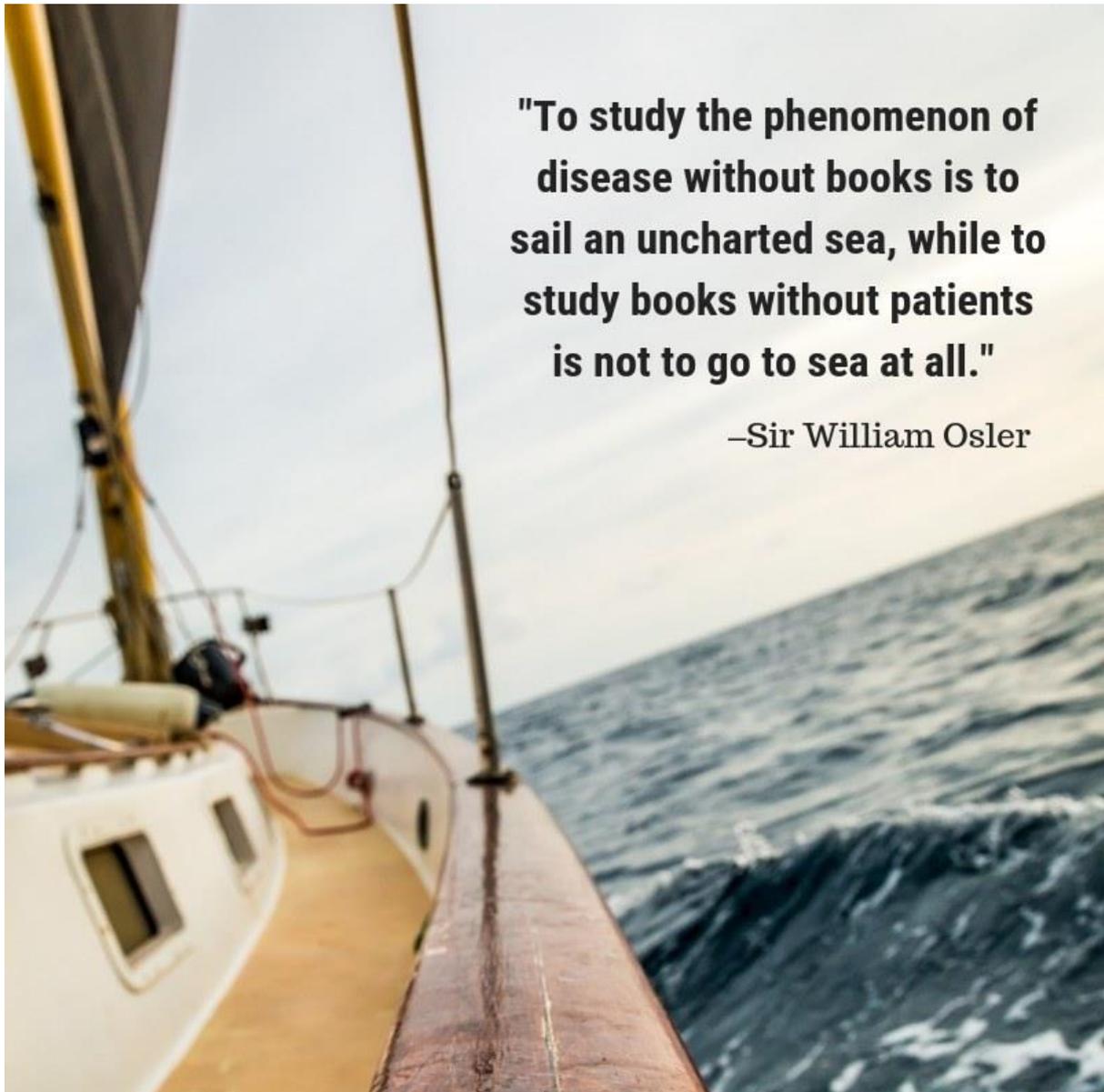
Welcome to the first HPEC Fast Facts for 2019. This month we look at a range of evidence-informed teaching strategies that can be used in the clinical setting.

If you have any ideas for future Fast Facts topics please let us know.

Jenny Moffett

Editor, HPEC Fast Facts

## Fast Facts: Clinical Teaching



**"To study the phenomenon of disease without books is to sail an uncharted sea, while to study books without patients is not to go to sea at all."**

**–Sir William Osler**

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- *Clinical teaching provides an essential learning environment for health professions students*
  - *Clinical teachers act as role models to their learners even outside of formal teaching sessions*
  - *There are specific teaching tools, e.g. one-minute preceptor, that can help you structure your clinical teaching*
  - *Time spent teaching is thought to have a positive impact on your own clinical practice*
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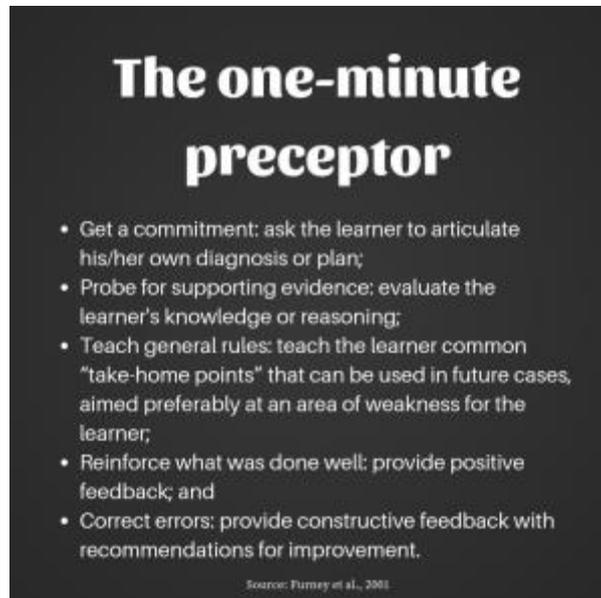
Clinical teaching provides health professions learners with unique opportunities to build skills, develop their professional identities and engage with real-world situations. The clinical setting also

provides a motivating environment for learners, who can see the relevance of what they have learned in the classroom.

However, clinical teaching is not without its challenges. Time constraints and logistical issues, e.g. access to patients and casework, can represent common dilemmas. In addition, teaching staff may find it difficult to balance the needs of learners and patients in a busy work environment. Because of this, it's helpful for clinical teaching sessions to be well-structured, flexible and time-efficient. Here we look at ten tips to consider in your own teaching practice:

1. Although clinical teaching is often opportunistic and can happen "on the fly", this doesn't mean that you can't plan for it. Consider learning outcomes you want to set for your sessions, and how best to achieve these under your current circumstances.
2. Enthusiasm (and apathy!) can be contagious. Use your body language, e.g. eye contact and smile, as well as introductions to engage your learners at the beginning of a session.
3. Tailor your teaching to the learners' stage of development. A few open-ended questions ("Tell me what you know about...so far.") at the start of the session can help you to activate your learners' prior knowledge, and to better understand where their "starting point" lies.
4. Use a recognised clinical teaching tool, e.g. the one-minute preceptor (see image), to help you structure your sessions. Studies suggest that the one-minute preceptor can facilitate the learning of higher-level concepts, and promote opportunities for assessment and feedback in a variety of clinical settings ([Lockspeiser & Paritosh, 2015](#); [Farrell et al., 2016](#)). Other popular tools include [SNAPPS](#) and [MiPLAN](#).
5. Use probing questions to help students to think critically about topics. Rather than asking for a fact or statistic, try using open-ended questions again, e.g. "What do you think is happening here?", "How do you think these symptoms arose?"
6. Monitor the learning environment as you go. Is the location too busy? Are there too many distractions? Are your learners hungry or tired? It's better to stop and address issues that act as fundamental barriers to learning.
7. A key role for the clinical teacher is to help their learners to build [confidence and self-efficacy](#). Take a moment to reflect and ask questions such as; "How actively involved are the students?", "How am I encouraging them to take ownership of their learning here?"
8. Clinical teachers also facilitate learning through role-modeling. Your learners will often take [powerful cues](#) from what you do and say, even when you are not "officially" teaching. It doesn't mean that you have to be super-human; indeed role modelling can help create a dialogue when mistakes or failures happen.
9. Remember that a clinical teaching experience, especially for the early years of health professions students, can be daunting. It's important that learners can identify at least one person in the setting to whom they can turn for advice ([Gordon et al., 2000](#)).
10. To develop your clinical teaching further, one quick and easy way is to engage with the RCSI peer observation initiative. Using this approach, you can pair up with another staff member to work on specific facets of your teaching practice that have the most relevance for you and your learners. For more information, and to access online peer observation resources, please visit the [HPEC website](#) [internal website, RCSI log-in required].

Finally, as a clinical teacher, did you know that there are hidden benefits for your own clinical performance? One Canadian study ([Lockyer et al., 2016](#)), which examined a large dataset of nearly 4,000 doctors, found that individuals with higher scores on their multisource feedback assessments reported spending more time teaching in patient care settings. It's thought that clinical teachers tend to engage with more critical and reflective thinking around topics, which has a positive impact for their own clinical practice.



## The one-minute preceptor

- Get a commitment: ask the learner to articulate his/her own diagnosis or plan;
- Probe for supporting evidence: evaluate the learner's knowledge or reasoning;
- Teach general rules: teach the learner common "take-home points" that can be used in future cases, aimed preferably at an area of weakness for the learner;
- Reinforce what was done well: provide positive feedback; and
- Correct errors: provide constructive feedback with recommendations for improvement.

Source: Furney et al., 2001

*1 - The one-minute preceptor*

## Useful resources

[Gray, D., Cozar, O., & Lefroy, J. \(2017\). Medical students' perceptions of bedside teaching. The clinical teacher, 14\(3\), 205-210.](#)

[Ramani, S., & Leinster, S. \(2008\). AMEE Guide no. 34: Teaching in the clinical environment. Medical teacher, 30\(4\), 347-364.](#)

[Spencer, J. \(2010\). Learning and teaching in the clinical environment. ABC of learning and teaching in medicine, 25-28](#)

[Steinert, Y., Basi, M., & Nugus, P. \(2017\). How physicians teach in the clinical setting: The embedded roles of teaching and clinical care. Medical teacher, 39\(12\), 1238-1244.](#)

Video: [The One-Minute Preceptor](#)

Video: [SNAPPS Introduction](#)

Where can I find out more?



For more details of our upcoming workshops on feedback and coaching strategies - and other events - please visit the HPEC [website](#).

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