How to write a case that stimulates discussion

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May 12, 2020
I have no disclosures
Objectives

1. Contrast appropriate case-based learning objectives for novice and advanced learners

2. Analyze the anticipated flow of a case

3. Create realistic scenarios that engage the learner
What prompted this workshop?

**Disasters**

Stuck on early part of case
Stuck on the answer
Just stuck – silence!
Planning
Introductions
How to begin?

Have pen and paper ready

Start thinking of your own session
The basics: Who? What? When?
FIRST
- Pick the focus
  (learning objective)

SMART

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Timebound

Ronald Harden 1999, 2007
Brodsky 2011
Identify the learner’s level of knowledge

Early learners

• Stereotypic so can learn the basic pattern recognition

Advanced learners

• Complex case with unrelated details or confounding data
How much time do you have?

1 learning point for every 15-20 min
You have the basics

- Goals
- Learners
- Setting and time

*Take a moment to jot down ideas*
Grab their attention

• Realistic
• Relevant
• Narrative
Use active and colorful language to create realistic cases

The patient complains of dysphagia

Ms. Hathaway found her hand-picked blueberries now seemed to stay lodged in her throat for hours

An elderly man has less stamina

Mr. Smith won the senior division of the town marathon last month, but is frustrated that he now cannot walk 2 blocks to the post office.

Name your patient thoughtfully

• Tamika Jackson
• Colleen O’Rourke
• Sheldon Hollingsworth
• Peter Lee

Do your case names reflect the composition of learners?

Could the names affect the diagnoses considered?

***Do NOT use a real patient lightly disguised!***
How do I...

FOCUS ON THE TREATMENT OPTIONS?
Mention the alternative treatment directly

• The Wallace family has heard about a medicine advertised on the radio and wants to know if that is a better option

• His cousin Ed had the same condition and was treated differently

• Shayna wants the pill form that is once weekly
Create barriers to elicit multiple diagnostic or treatment options

• Allergy to a medicine

• Patient wants only dietary changes, not medicine

• Insurance refuses to cover that medication

• Anxiety about side effects

• Cannot swallow a pill or give self-injection
How do I...

FOCUS ON DIAGNOSIS?
Describe symptoms the way patients present them

• *Objects slip out of Anna’s right hand and she keeps tripping*

• *Mr. Jones sees double as he looks around his small room*

• Ricky is so thirsty
Present data without interpretation

• Pulse 46
• Blood pressure 160/110

• Are these values normal? What about in the context of this patient?
• An athlete or artist? A patient relaxed or in pain crisis?
Have the **report** go missing
Assess the patient for a second opinion

• The previous diagnosis could be right OR wrong

• Realistic way to assess every aspect of the case
How do I...

FOCUS ON THE DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS?
Don’t be a slave to chronology

• 15 year old Kayla is brought from soccer practice with pain and vomiting. Her x-ray shows bowel obstruction.

• This leads to a very full discussion of the differential.

• Later, her father arrives (or her old records are found) and it is revealed that she has inflammatory bowel disease and had surgery.
How do I...

FOCUS ON THE NATURAL HISTORY?
Lose your patient to follow up

• Mr. Rivera has not been to your office for 4 years. When he returns, in a great deal of pain. He has not been on medication for his arthritis.

• Real world
• Skips ahead to later stage of the condition
• Allows comparison of treated vs untreated natural history
• Reasons for non-adherence (cost, insurance, availability, denial, fear)
Checklist for breakout groups

• Identify the learner level (ie novice/student, advanced learner, peer)
• Identify the time frame (ie 30, 45, 90 min)
• Identify 1 specific learning idea for each 15 min  (antibiotic resistance for UTI treatment, controversy over steroids in asthma)
• Name and describe the patient
• Write first 3 sentences of the case
Breakout Groups!
How did your breakout session go?
Use **missing information and mistakes** to provoke discussion

• Dr. Chan’s report comes but no slides or films

• Ms. Harrigan forgot to stop her aspirin before surgery

• Joanna takes the methotrexate, but did not think the folate mattered so stopped taking it
Teach someone else

• Jamie the 3rd-year medical student forgot to obtain any family history

• Dr. Ching is new to the hospital and asks about timeframe for ordering imaging studies

• Joy has finished her internship and now will assess her first floridly psychotic patient alone. She asks you for advice.
Summary

• FIRST identify specific objective(s) of the talk

• Clarify time allotted and level of the learners

• Craft the case to direct the discussion to the desired topics

• Make it realistic and vivid and active
Thank you!

Twelve Tips on Writing a Discussion Case that Engages Learners

Cohen, D, Newman L, Fishman LN
Medical Teacher 2017