

Section on Management of Healthcare Delivery

Specimen 10-minute scenario

Explanation

The syllabus for this section includes the following subject headings:

- Health services management, administration and use of resources;
- Evidence-based practice, clinical guidelines and outcomes;
- Medico-legal responsibilities, jurisprudence and ethics;
- Clinical effectiveness / Clinical audit;
- Appraisal / Performance assessment / Peer review;
- Clinical risk management / Complaints;
- Teaching / Training / Assessment / Continuing professional development;
- Confidentiality / Data protection / Freedom of information.

The topic for this specimen scenario is 'complaints'

The candidate is given the scenario which 'sets the scene' for the viva, and is allowed 10 minutes for reflection and, therefore, an opportunity to anticipate the questions and prepare answers. He/she is allowed to make notes which, to protect the question bank, must be handed to the examiners at the end of the viva. The viva will last 10 minutes.

Among the set of questions which are used by the examiners, the first is one which the candidate will probably be expecting: the remainder relate to the developing scenario as it is revealed to the candidate.

For this particular scenario, there are basically four questions, shown in **bold print**, each of which should be put to the candidate but these questions have component parts which are numbered below. Some candidates may be able to give a comprehensive and detailed answer to the broad question but most will require some degree of prompting, using the numbered questions.

The Scenario

During a routine outpatient clinic, you, a newly appointed consultant, are aware of raised voices and an argument ensuing in the adjacent surgery between your Senior House Officer and a patient. You enter the surgery to find an angry and tearful female patient who lists a whole series of complaints and insists that she is not leaving until you sort her dental problem out. The patient continues to explain in a loud voice that she is totally dissatisfied with the way she has been treated by the Senior House Officer and the Hospital Department and threatens to take her concerns to the local newspaper and her member of parliament.

Be prepared to explain how you would manage the patient's immediate concerns and dissatisfaction to try to resolve the situation. Consider also how the problem might escalate and how it should subsequently be dealt with.

The Viva

Q1 How would you manage the patient's immediate concerns and try to resolve the situation?

1) What communication skills would help to defuse the situation?

- 2) Under what circumstances should you refer the matter to the hospital 'complaints officer'?
- 3) How far should you go in acknowledging the patient's grievance?
- 4) What should you write in the patient's clinical notes?

Q2. The patient leaves the department, apparently placated, with an appointment to return to have treatment continued. However, a few days later, you are contacted by your hospital manager (the complaints officer) who shows you a letter from the patient falsely (in your view) alleging that you spoke to her in a disdainful manner, showing a callous disregard for her dental health and that she left the surgery feeling humiliated and in tears. She wants to discuss her concerns further with the hospital manager and is threatening to go to the newspapers unless she receives an unreserved apology from you. What action should you take?

- 1) How and when should you relate what has taken place to the complaints officer?
- 2) What steps might you take to review the incident?
- 3) What and/or whom should you consult before sending your written response to the complaints officer?

Q3. How might you use this whole incident to improve the service provided by you and your team?

- 1) What questions should you ask yourself?
- 2) If concerns become apparent with regard to your Senior House Officer's clinical performance and patient management, what should you do?

Q4 Some time later, you are contacted on the telephone by a newspaper which is proposing to print the patient's allegations and the journalist would like to include your response. How should you react to this?