

# The Extended Consultation

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Consultation models are central to Family Medicine training and can help bring structure to pivotal moments in the doctor-patient relationship. The consultation is the main and basic tool of family medicine and “it’s the central act of medicine [that] deserves to be understood” as stated by Pendleton.<sup>1</sup> Consultations are the skilled application of everyday communication skills, knowledge base, examination skills, and problem-solving.

Consultation models can range from doctor-driven to patient-focused and task-orientated. Well-known primary care consultation models such as the Calgary-Cambridge Model,<sup>2</sup> Pendleton’s Model,<sup>1</sup> Neighbour Model,<sup>3</sup> and Waitzkin’s Model<sup>4</sup> were designed to teach Family Physicians the importance of patient-centredness, psychosocial factors, and shared decision-making.

Communication with our patients is the key to Family Medicine practice. Every consultation is unique and an opportunity for Family Physicians to promote healthy living and provide treatment for pre-existing conditions. Using an effective consultation model can help Family Physicians to effectively address the patient’s agenda and can lead to higher levels of patient satisfaction. Effective consultations can also lead to improved compliance with treatment and improved health outcomes.

The Extended Consultation model by A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean and A/Prof Goh Lee Gan teaches physicians how to use extended tools to selectively access psychosocial information where there is a need.

This issue of the *Singapore Family Physician* provides an overview on how Family Physicians can utilise the Extended Consultation model in their practice.

Unit 1 details how the history can be extended to record the genogram and salient events in the patient’s history.

Unit 2 describes how the acronyms “MINDS” and “CAR-ACE” can be used to extend the physical examination to evocate psychosocial facts and obtain more granular facts respectively.

Unit 3 details how the analysing the data can achieve 3 ways of formulation: 4 Ps formulation, S-BAR formulation, and ROADS formulation.

Unit 4 describes how behavioural and cognitive techniques can be used to approach problem situations.

Unit 5 details how the pattern approach can be utilised to both understand the patient’s patterns of coping and counsel the patient on new positive patterns of response.

Unit 6 describes what are presence work and positive work, and how both can be used to help patient’s develop skills that promote mental resilience and health.

Also in this issue, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan has selected ten current readings on topics related to the Extended Consultation.

## REFERENCES

1. Pendleton D, Schofield T, Tate P, Havelock P. The Consultation: An Approach to Learning and Teaching. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 1984.
2. Kurtz SM, Silverman JD. The Calgary-Cambridge Referenced Observation Guides: an aid to defining the curriculum and organizing the teaching in communication training programmes. *Med Educ* 1996;302:83-9.
3. Neighbour R. The Inner Consultation. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers; 1987.
4. Waitzkin H. A critical theory of medical discourse: ideology, social control, and the processing of social context in medical encounters. *J Health Soc Behav* 1989;302:220-39.

# Extending the Consultation – Three Toolsets to Help

A/Prof Cheong Pak Yean, A/Prof Goh Lee Gan

## INTRODUCTION

This Extended Consultation Course 2025 is the second time we are organising this Family Practice Skills Course; the first was conducted in 2018. Extending the Consultation continues to be a useful strategy in meeting the needs of patients who have social issues that require help in resolving these issues.

## TOOLSETS

There are three toolsets to help in the Extended Consultation, namely:

1. Methods Toolset
2. Formulation Toolset
3. Approach + Work Toolset (“Approach” is from the context of the doctor; “Work” is from the context of the therapist and client)

The Methods Toolset extends the usual consultation methods of History-taking, Physical examination, and Investigations. The history is extended by gathering information on the patient’s genogram and timeline. The examination is extended from the physical body to the mind and beyond. The investigation of the body is extended by Socratic inquiry.

The Formulation toolset extends the understanding of salient psychosocial dimensions of the patient by applying the following tools, which will be elaborated in the skills course:

- 4 Ps of Reasons for Encounter;
- S-BAR in complex and chaotic situations; and
- ROADS to understand the psychosocial sub-systems of the patient.

The Approach + Work toolset provides the tools of analysis. The choice of tools depends on the bio-psychosocial issues that have to be addressed. Each tool in the three toolsets may be used as and when needed to extend the usual clinical consultation methods of history-taking, diagnosis, and management.

- Problem approach/work is for discrete issues in situations that arise within a period of time.
- Pattern approach/work is for a set of issues linked by a common theme that can be expressed as stories.

- Presence approach/work is for issues of the here and now, the here in space and the now in time. The type of presence approach/work in the Here can be remembered using the acronym “Humanistic, Existential, Redintegration, and Experiential” while the Now work is mindfulness and flow.
- The positive toolset has three elements of creating mentally the pleasant life, the good life, and the meaningful life. The pleasant life is to recall three happy things at the end of each day; the good life is to engage the world with our signature strengths; and the meaningful life is to be able to contribute to society with our signature strengths. The details can be found in Chapter 11 of *The Extended Consultation*, Second Edition, 2024.

## BOOKS

Two books provide the resource materials for this Family Practice Skills Course.

The first is the Second Edition of *The Extended Consultation: Talk Matters!*.<sup>1</sup> This 172-page book was published in 2024 and provides further examples of case studies used in this Skills Course.

The second is *Being Human: Stories from Family Medicine*.<sup>2</sup> The latest version of which was also published in 2024. Comprising 180 pages, this book is a collection of drawings done by Medical students of their new clinical experiences paired with the reflections of seasoned practitioners. These insights are gleaned through the application of the extended consultation toolsets.

## CONCLUSION

The 2025 Extended Consultation course caters to the need of situations where the problems of living necessitate extending the consultation. The framework in the FPSC course remains the same as the 2018 Course. In this Guest Editorial, we have focussed on the three toolkits that can help manage the extended consultation. Enjoy this Family Practice Skills Course.

## REFERENCES

1. Cheong PY, Goh LG, How L. *The Extended Consultation: Talk Matters!*. 2nd ed. Singapore; 2024.
2. Cheong PY, Ong CP, editors. *Being Human: Stories from Family Medicine*. 2nd ed. Singapore; 2024.