

Extending the Consultation – Three Toolsets to Help

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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!*.¹ 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*.² 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.