

Teaching Tips

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Teaching Pattern Recognition: Aunt Minnie Method

Medical students and residents are required to develop diagnostic skills for common and rare medical conditions. Researchers and educators believe that, in the outpatient setting, commonly seen acute conditions can be managed with short, focused histories and physical examinations using the principle of pattern recognition. The Aunt Minnie method is an educational approach that emphasizes pattern recognition in clinical teaching. There is, however, no evaluation data assessing the effectiveness of this method.



Learner presents the chief complaint and the presumptive diagnosis (30 seconds)

Learner begins a write-up and preceptor evaluates the patient (5 minutes)

Preceptor discusses case with learner (1-5 minutes)

Preceptor reviews and signs medical record (1-2 minutes)

Socrates becomes obsolete in a harried setting—which is no place for teaching beginners. For them, I'd try a Socrates sandwich on Aunt Minnie, i.e., begin with Aunt Minnie, switch to Socrates, and then back to Aunt Minnie. Hold the mayo.

Editor's note

Catherine D. DeAngelis, MD
(Cunningham et al, 1999)

References / Resources:

Sackett DL, Haynes RB, Tugwell P. Clinical Epidemiology. Boston, Mass: Little Brown & Co Inc; 1985:3-15.

Cunningham, AS, Blatt SD, Fuller PG, Weinberger HL. *The art of precepting: Socrates or Aunt Minnie?* Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med, 1999. 153(2): p. 114-6.

Cayley, W.E., Jr. *Effective clinical education: strategies for teaching medical students and residents in the office.* WMJ, 2011. 110(4): p. 178-81.

Factors that facilitate using Aunt Minnie's Method	Advantages of using Aunt Minnie's Method	Concerns about using Aunt Minnie's Method	Response to concerns about using Aunt Minnie's Method
<p>The problem is straightforward.</p> <p>The patient should be examined by the preceptor.</p> <p>Preceptor should be sure of the diagnosis; if the preceptor is unsure of the diagnosis, s/he should be willing to admit that s/he is uncertain about the diagnosis.</p>	<p>Learners can work on time management and see a large number of patients in a short period of time.</p> <p>Learners get immediate feedback on clinical exam and diagnosis and on written notes as well.</p> <p>Learners develop better understanding of the common and normal presentations of illness. They are also better able to recognize when information is odd or discordant.</p>	<p>Learners may fail to develop the skills of detailed clinical examinations</p> <p>Learners may learn to make snap judgments.</p> <p>Learners do not have the opportunity to see the preceptor model parts of the history and physical.</p>	<p>Preceptors can help learners recognize when a detailed evaluation is needed.</p> <p>Rapid pattern recognition is used by most experienced clinicians most of the time.</p> <p>Aunt Minnie approach can be used in conjunction with the traditional approach.</p>