Peer-to-Peer Examination and Observation during Practice Policy

Clinical Skills

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1 Introduction

The Clinical Skills Teaching and Learning Centre (CSTLC) offers students the opportunity to receive a structured education in practical examination and procedural skills. Thereby ensuring that the General Medical Council (GMC) Outcomes for Graduates (2018) are met.

Competence in practical skills is the result of a structured educational process i.e. theory, demonstration, questioning, practice under supervision, reflection and feedback.

This policy is designed to ensure that student doctors receive equal opportunity to develop their practical skills by practicing on ‘patients’, and also allows them to learn to appreciate the patient experience, develop empathy for their patients and encourage learning to preserve patient dignity, respect and confidentiality.

When attending teaching sessions within CSTLC, student doctors are required to practice non-intimate clinical examinations and some non-invasive procedural skills on peers from within their cohort. Occasionally, they may be required to practice on a patient instructor – an intercalating student doctor acting as the patient and supporting practice or a member of teaching staff. This policy ensures practice is maximised with the following advantages:

- Learning how normal healthy examination findings look and feel
- What it may feel like from a patient’s perspective
- Enabling peer to peer feedback
- Enabling staff and patient feedback
- Generating a safe environment in which to practice and improve upon skills
- Providing a time efficient method in which to practice repeatedly

Student doctors are expected to engage with the educational model adopted by the University of Liverpool, School of Medicine, CSTLC. This includes performing examinations upon other student doctors i.e. your peers and patient instructors with their consent. Conversely, you will consent to your peers performing examinations on yourself for the purpose of education.

This policy aims to minimise the possible negative effects of peer to peer examination, which may include:

- The discovery of an abnormality on the person acting as a patient
- Student doctors acting inappropriately towards one another, the models or equipment.
- A breach of confidentiality (e.g. discussing another’s appearance, performance, illness following practice)
2 **Scope**

This policy applies to all student doctors engaging with the CSTLC teaching programme.

3 **Practice requiring clinical training models**

Intimate aspects of clinical practice such as genitalia, rectal and breast examination must only be performed on clinical training models.

Invasive aspects of clinical practice such as venepuncture, cannulation and catheterisation must only be performed on clinical training models.

4 **Observation**

During all taught sessions a minimum of two members of the CSTLC teaching faculty must be present per student group to observe practice. The teaching faculty may sometimes be further supported by a patient instructor. The purpose of observation during clinical skills teaching is to provide immediate constructive feedback and to enhance the learning of student doctors.

5 **Practice Area**

Dependant on the clinical skill(s) being practiced during a teaching session, the environment set up will be agreed upon by the CSTLC staff. Often this will include the setup of individual cubicle areas, but may also include open seating areas or workstations. The staff will bear in mind when deciding on the layout of the centre the privacy students require and the necessity to observe student doctors practice.

6 **Personal Exposure**

To efficiently practice certain skills and examinations some sessions will require a level of undress. Student doctors will be informed of any specific clothing requirements (e.g. shorts) and the level of exposure necessary to practice these skills or examinations as part of the ‘prep presentation’, which is available for student doctors to view prior to attending all clinical skills teaching sessions.

Examples of teaching that requires a level of exposure includes:

- Examination of the chest i.e. respiratory, CVS and GI
- Motor examination
- Lymph node examination
(Please note this list is not exhaustive)

7 Head Coverings

Where practice requires exposure of the head and neck, students wearing a head covering may request access to a cubicle (or a more private area). This should be requested before the session. Please speak to a member of the teaching staff on arrival to the centre or email the Deputy Director, Mrs Cathy Carr on c.carr@liverpool.ac.uk.

8 Observed practice requiring a level of personal exposure

During observed practice requiring a level of exposure i.e. respiratory examination, each pair of students will undertake practice in a screened cubicle. For each examination, there will be a particular element that a member of the teaching faculty must observe each student practicing. This is to ensure good technique. The element to be observed is identified on the CSTLC teaching timetable.

In order to provide additional instruction or to correct a student’s technique a member of the teaching faculty may ask permission to demonstrate an element of the examination on you within the privacy of your practice area. If you are not comfortable with this you can refuse.

The teaching faculty will inform each student group before they enter the cubicle to observe practice. The teaching faculty observing practice may be male or female. All teaching faculty will be introduced at the beginning of each teaching session or prior to practice. Both male and female faculty may enter the practice cubicle. Individuals who feel unable to adhere to this policy i.e. are uncomfortable with the idea of a male or female member of staff entering their cubicle must contact Cathy Carr (Deputy Director of the Centre) c.carr@liverpool.ac.uk 0151 794 8040 prior to attending the centre.

9 Practicing with a peer

It is important that students feel comfortable when practicing peer to peer examinations. It is the choice of the student who they should practice with.

If the thought of practicing with someone other than a chosen partner causes distress please contact the Director or the Deputy Director of the Centre (contact details below) who, with the student’s permission, will share this information with the teaching faculty of the CSTLC to ensure the chosen pairing. If CSTLC staff inadvertently divide the group up and separate students who wish to practice together they should inform a member of teaching faculty immediately to correct the error. Please see Appendix 2 for the standard operating procedure that will be followed by all the teaching faculty once the student has spoken to the Director or Deputy Director of the CSTLC.
10 Practice with a patient instructor

To maximise practice time, on rare occasions, a student doctor may be offered the opportunity to practice with a patient instructor. This option will be available only at the discretion of teaching faculty. Decisions will not be based upon student doctor preferences for practice.

11 Incidental Clinical findings when undertaking a clinical examination procedure on a peer

When student doctors are practicing peer to peer examinations on one another or a member of the teaching faculty examines a student doctor, there is a possibility that the person undertaking the examination may discover an incidental clinical finding / abnormality. If a member of the teaching faculty is not present during such an event, the student doctor should bring this to the attention of a member of the teaching faculty immediately (during the teaching session) and a “Clinical Findings Form” completed. Copies of which can be obtained from CSTLC and can be seen in Appendix 1.

12 Students acting inappropriately towards one another, patient instructors, models or equipment.

The annual student doctor agreement signed by all MBChB student doctors each year stipulates that students will:

‘Respect the skills of colleagues and other professionals and not unfairly discriminate against them.

I will listen to patients and respect their views, treat them politely and considerately, and respect patients’ privacy and dignity. I will endeavour to ensure consent has been obtained prior to any interaction with patients, and will respect their right to refuse to take part in teaching’.

Please remember the CSTLC is a simulated clinical environment and the School regards peers and volunteers acting as patients to be treated as such, this includes the simulation models. Therefore student doctors are required to abide by the student doctor agreement when attending the CSTLC.
13 A breach of confidentiality (e.g. discussing another’s appearance, performance, illness following practice)

During a teaching session students will see each other in various stages of undress (please refer to section 6). Discussions of a peer’s physical appearance or anything a peer shares with you during these sessions e.g. scars, previous illness or ongoing treatment should be treated as confidential. If you are found to have breached confidentiality this will be will be passed to the University of Liverpool Fitness to Practice Committee.

If you have concerns that a peer’s health may impact on patient care you should encourage them to speak to a member of the teaching faculty or the Wellbeing service. Unless the student doctor is considered an immediate risk to themselves or others, a peer’s confidence must be respected at all times.

References


Terms

Peer fellow student doctor in the same academic year
Teaching faculty staff who have a knowledge of teaching and clinical practice for example CSTLC staff, MBChB teachers, visiting clinicians, academic fellows
Patient instructor an intercalating student who has been trained to act as a patient and support practice during teaching sessions
Contact details

Helen Box – Director of CSTLC  
h.box@liverpool.ac.uk

Cathy Carr – Deputy Director CSTLC  
c.carr@liverpool.ac.uk
Appendix 1 Clinical Findings / Concerns

Clinical findings / concerns witnessed by a student or member of the teaching faculty when undertaking a clinical examination procedure on a peer/student

Student Name:

Students Year of Study:

Date and time clinical finding discovered:

Brief description of clinical finding:

I have had a conversation with the student regarding the clinical finding listed above, offering them an opportunity to ask questions which I have answered to the best of my ability and experience.

Please tick if done

I have confirmed to the student doctor that the findings will remain confidential.

Please tick if done

I have advised the student doctor to seek further medical advice

I have advised the student doctor that it is their responsibility to take any further action.

Name of Lecturer

Name of Student

Signature of Lecturer

Signature of Student
Appendix 2 Student specific requests regarding peer practice

Students will contact the Deputy Director to request a stipulation to their practice that will enable them to be comfortable during practice. This may be specifying a particular gender observe their practice or a particular student who has consented to partner them. This can be difficult to achieve which is why the student must contact the director or deputy director as soon as possible.

The Deputy Director of the CSTLC will meet with the student doctor to discuss their concern. And the following form will be completed.

Student Name

........................................................................................................................................

Student Number

........................................................................................................................................

Year of study ........................................Timetabled session..............................................

Specific action requested on behalf of the student doctor

I hereby consent to my name, year of study and the timetabled session for which I attend to be shared with the teaching faculty of the CSTLC to ensure my request can be actioned at each teaching session.

Student doctor’s name

Student doctor’s signature

Staff member’s name and title

Staff member’s signature

This information will be stored electronically and shared only with the teaching faculty of the CSTLC. It is the student’s responsibility to inform the Deputy Director of the CSTLC of any change to this request and to request it again at the beginning of each academic year of study, so the agreement is carried on as requested.