The Art of Mastering Oral Case Presentations: A Third Year Medical Student’s Perspective

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The Why
- Oral case presentations play important roles in patient care, team communication, and med student education, yet are often learned through trial and error.

Oral Case Presentation Definition:
- Team member presents patient information in standardized manner to all team members with goal of providing justification for diagnostic and therapeutic plan.
- Team members reflect upon presentation and offer additional insight/advice.
- Currently, there is limited guidance/ best practices in the Med Ed literature, especially from the perspective of the learners themselves.

Our Methods
- Literature review (via PubMed, MEDLINE, Web of Science, Embase), English-language, search ending 8/29/2022
- Keywords:
  - Oral case presentation
  - Case presentation
  - Oral presentation
  - Cognitive load theory
  - Deliberate practice medical education
  - Note taking memory
  - SOAP notes
- Selected relevant articles to extract key concepts
- Consulted key stakeholders (students and education experts)
- Iterative process to reach consensus results with seven recommended strategies

References

Takeaways
- 7 concrete strategies backed by literature that med students can use to succeed with oral case presentations from the beginning of their clerkships.

Pre-round the same way every time

Purpose: Studies on Cognitive Learning Theory show that standardization frees working memory, thus improving learning capacity by reducing mental effort and increasing efficiency.

Do: Review the chart in the same order every time.

Don’t: Get distracted by abnormal results and jump out of order to review them.

Pro-Tip: Communicate with the overnight nurse to get patient updates.

Take efficient notes while pre-rounding

Purpose: Note-taking aids in both memory and comprehension.

Do: As you progress, write less subjective portions and write only harder to remember objective data (e.g., vital signs, lab results).

Don’t: Read your notes verbatim as you present, use them as a reference.

Pro-Tip: Use different colors to make key results stand out.

Run key portions of your presentations by the team

Purpose: Ensures team members are on the same page and reduces interruptions.

Do: Focus on discussing your top differential/the order of your problem list.

Don’t: Give your full presentation as residents are also busy.

Pro-Tip: Ask your resident when would be the most convenient time to talk.

Learn the format and stick to it

Purpose: Using a standardized communication method—typically subjective, objective, assessment, and plan—provides a framework for clinical reasoning makes information retrieval easier.

Do: Refrain from editorializing (e.g., why you think the patient has abnormal vitals in the objective section; save this for the assessment and plan).

Don’t: “For vital signs, patient has a fever of 38°C which I think is due to pneumonia.”

Pro-Tip: Ask what format/content is most relevant to that specialty.

Trend results

Purpose: Provides context for abnormal results/vitals, signaling that you understand their significance.

Do: “Hemoglobin is 9 from a baseline of 14.”

Don’t: “Hemoglobin is 9.”

Pro-Tip: Present the range rather than the most recent value.

Commit to a plan

Purpose: The assessment and plan showcases your knowledge and clinical reasoning. Provide your thought process for your differential and plan.

Do: “I want to order a chest x-ray to rule out pneumonia.”

Don’t: “I am not sure if this is correct… but I think we could consider ordering a chest x-ray?”

Pro-Tip: Don’t allow pauses that invite interruptions.

Solicit feedback

Purpose: Deliberate practice is a focused, coached effort to improve performance at well-defined tasks.

Do: “What would you have included/excluded?”

“How would you have prioritized the problem list?”

Don’t: Wait until the end of the rotation to solicit feedback.

Pro-Tip: Note changes made to your assessment and plan by the team and incorporate these into your next presentation.

Learn what’s the story.

Purpose: Expectations for oral case presentations.

Do: Prepare for patient updates.

Don’t: Assume the resident will fill in the gaps.

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Round the same way every time

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Solution feedback

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Note taking, review, memory, and comprehension.

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Practice Presenting

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Maintenance and retrieval of information can be improved with efficient note-taking strategies.