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# Navigating complex patient relationships: Strategies for difficult encounters in clinical practice



WEDNESDAY  
17 JULY 2024



[SAST]  
19:00 to 20:00

Prof Sharon Kling



Emeritus Associate Professor, Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Project Consultant and Part-time Lecturer, Division of Medical Ethics and Law, Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University, Western Cape

Dr Di Hawarden



Editor of Current Allergy and Clinical Immunology (CACI), Allergist and Researcher, A past chairperson of Allergy Society of South Africa (ALLSA), Cape Town, Western Cape

Difficult patient encounters are relatively common in clinical practice. On average a difficult patient-doctor relationship occurs in about 15% of adult patient consultations. Typically, difficult encounters occur in the setting of complex, often chronic medical issues (such as chronic pain, and/or mental illness) that are associated with or worsened by social factors such as poverty, abusive relationships, and addiction. In paediatric practice it is often the parent or guardian who is involved in the difficult encounter. This situation poses an additional ethical dilemma because the child patient is at risk of being refused access to the practice because of the “difficult parent”.

James Groves' grouped difficult patients' behaviour into 'four stereotypes:

- (1) dependent clingers;
- (2) entitled demanders;
- (3) manipulative help-rejectors; and
- (4) self-destructive deniers.'

Patient, physician, and system factors all contribute to the difficult patient encounter. Managing the difficult encounter involves actively listening to the patient, identifying the emotion and expressing empathy, exploring different ways of managing the situation, and providing closure by agreeing on a way forward. The presentation will illustrate difficult patient encounters using case studies and will also cover strategies for managing them.

Reference 1 : Groves JE. Taking care of the hateful patient. New Engl J Med 1978;298(16):883-887.

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Registration coming soon - Save the date:



14, 15 & 16 November 2024

UCT GSB Academic Conference Centre at Protea Hotel by Marriott Cape Town Waterfront Breakwater Lodge