

Questions to Ask Yourself

In evaluating your own clinical assessment skills/practices, there are many questions to reflect on that can help you focus on important aspects of assessment. Here are some examples:

- How long have I been practicing in my particular discipline? What areas of clinical specialty and settings have contributed to my experience?
- Has a majority of my experience and practice been in a traditional medical model/acute care setting?
- What is my current or most recent practice or experience?
- Are my assessment practices based primarily on a body systems approach?
- Have I been required to adapt my assessment practices to adjust to the variation in patient types and setting? If so, how and in what ways?
- Do I make patient-specific adaptations to my assessment approaches? Am I comfortable making such adaptations quickly as the situation requires? What are the cues that I need to make such adaptations?
- Have I been practicing in home care less than a year? If so, what adjustments have I made to my assessment practices from my most recent clinical experience?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of my communication style? Am I a good listener? How do I indicate interest or empathy? Is it non-verbally with a nod or a facial expression, or verbally with a comment or a phrase? Do I pose questions in a non-threatening manner and ask for clarification, when appropriate?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of my observation skills? Do I watch the patient's ability to open a medicine bottle as intently as I would watch to see if he is having difficulty breathing or has an unsteady gait?
- What patient factors have influenced how I perform a comprehensive assessment?
- Are there particular ethnic populations or cultures that receive services from my agency? Have I adapted my assessment strategies for assessing patients of different cultures? Was this helpful in obtaining necessary and important information? Are there strategies I would like to learn or apply? What agency or other resources are available for understanding other cultures?
- What patient factors do I find particularly difficult to manage? Have I tried other strategies to adjust how I perform the comprehensive assessment in such situations? Did this work? What would I do differently?

- What agency factors have I encountered that I suspect influence how I perform a comprehensive assessment? Have I found a successful method for adapting to these, one that results in a thorough comprehensive assessment? What agency resources are available?
- What geographic factors influence how I perform a comprehensive assessment? How have I managed these? Are there strategies I consistently apply?
- What environmental factors influence how I perform a comprehensive assessment? How have I managed these? Am I sensitive to certain sanitation or safety factors? Do these affect how I conduct the comprehensive assessment? How can I adapt, what can I do to increase my ability for performing the assessment in these circumstances?
- What approach do I take to the physical assessment of my patients? What is the most frequent sequence I use and why? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
- Are there approaches that I have heard others describe that could provide a more integrated and time efficient comprehensive assessment?
- What can I learn from other disciplines about how to incorporate a systems assessment into the comprehensive assessment?
- What approach do I take to functional assessment? What are the advantages and disadvantages?
- What is the format of the comprehensive assessment forms at my agency? How are OASIS items integrated? Does my agency encourage a systems approach or a functional approach? Have we, as a staff, discussed assessment approaches that seem to “work” for both the patient and the clinician?
- Does my agency's assessment form “mirror” or complement my approach to assessment? Does the form determine how I perform the comprehensive assessment? Do I tend to use the assessment form as a questionnaire? Does the form assist or “get in the way of” my assessment process?
- What strategies can I adopt to perform a functional assessment in a timely manner without interrupting attention the patient, even if it does not follow the format of the document?
- What are my strengths and weaknesses for interview? Do I evaluate my own skills in this area?

- What type of interview style do I tend to use most often? Do I use the patient's response to ask a more focused question? Can I tell when my interview questions have not been effective?
- Do I sometimes use my agency's assessment form to ask only closed-ended direct questions? Do I tend to do this more often when I am extremely busy or tired?
- What other interview strategies might I try to enhance my assessment skills?