



National Healthcare
Communication
Programme

PROVIDING STRUCTURE

CALGARY-CAMBRIDGE GUIDE



Making conversations easier

Clickable contents

Providing structure

Make organisation overt

Attend to flow



Providing structure

Make organisation overt

- **Agreeing the agenda** for your consultation helps you and the patient/family negotiate their way through it and understand and process the information. *“First I want to find out how you are feeling today, what your main concerns are and then I want to talk about the treatment. So, how are you feeling...”*
- **Summarise and recall** throughout to check understanding: *“So just to check your appetite has not been the same and you have been losing weight”*.
- **Signpost** and use transitional statements to move from one part of the consultation to the next – *“OK, so let's now talk about treatment options”*.
- Another form of structuring would be with relatives – it's easier for everyone if we avoid **relatives** interrupting the patient when they are telling us their story, so we need to organise them and tell them what is going to happen... we might say... *“It's great that you are with your mum today. What I would like to do is hear what has been going on from your mum and then you can tell me what you have noticed and what has been worrying you”*.



Providing structure

By saying this relatives know to keep quiet while mum is talking to you but they also know that you will give them time to express their own worries and concerns.

Attend to flow

- Apply a **logical structure** to the consultation.
- Keep to **time**. Some clinicians like to make clear the approximate amount of time available for the consultation; others prefer not to do this. Whatever your approach, it is important to make it clear to the patient and relatives how you are moving through the consultation.

TIP

- Structuring your consultations is important to ensure that you manage your time effectively and that key points are covered. Bear in mind that while every consultation requires some structure, each one will be different and requires a flexible approach to ensure that all important information is considered and that the patient feels a true partner in discussions about their own health and well-being.



Providing structure

This Guide is the work of Paul Kinnersley of EACH (the International Association for Communication in Healthcare) and Cardiff University & Winifred Ryan of HSE (Health Service Executive) with the help and support of Peter Gillen, Eva Doherty, Jonathan Silverman and many others in EACH.

