

The Medicines Related Consultation Skills Assessment Tool (MR-CAT) is a validated global assessment tool which will help you identify your strengths and any areas where you need to develop your skills and behaviours and improve your technique. The MR-CAT was originally developed for assessing consultations by direct observation of practice and you can also use it as a self-assessment tool for any of your consultations.

How to use the MR-CAT as a self-assessment tool

Step 1: Preparation

Read through the five sections of the MR-CAT to familiarise yourself with the three levels of practice and the descriptors for each level of practice.

Step 2: Undertake a person-centred consultation

Undertake a person-centred consultation, applying the skills and techniques you have learnt and/or acquired from CPPE consultations skills programmes and/or from prior learning and experience. The consultation could be a structured medication review, a long-term condition review, a new medicine service (NMS) consultation, an over-the-counter (OTC) consultation, an urgent or emergency supply of a medicine, provision of emergency hormonal contraception (EHC), support for a minor ailment, etc.

Step 3: Complete a self-assessment of your practice using the MR-CAT

Timely reflection following the consultation will help you to identify strengths and areas for development. To get the best from this self-assessment, be honest with yourself and try to be objective about your performance. Remember, it is okay to have areas for improvement as well as areas of good performance.

Start by reflecting on the 'Introduction' section of the MR-CAT and ask yourself "*How well did I introduce the consultation and build initial rapport?*" Look at the descriptors for each of the three levels of practice: 'competent', 'excellent' or 'needs further development'. What did you do at the introduction stage of the consultation? Which of the descriptors most closely matches what you did/said in the introduction? Assess yourself as either 'competent', 'excellent' or 'needs further development' for the introduction.

There are several descriptors included in each section of the MR-CAT, which are not intended to be used as a tick box checklist. Therefore, you will need to use your judgement to decide which level of practice your consultation most closely matched for each section.

Then, repeat the process for the 'Gathering information and identifying problems', 'Shared decision making', and 'Closure and Consultation behaviours' sections of the MR-CAT. Reflect on the descriptors for each level of practice and assess yourself as either 'competent', 'excellent' or 'needs further development' for each of these sections.

Having completed the self-assessment for the five stages of the MR-CAT, reflect on the consultation overall. How would you rate the overall consultation: 'competent', 'excellent' or 'needs further development'?

Step 4: Identify your strengths and your development needs

Having completed the self-assessment, identify your strengths and development needs. There is a space on the final page of the MR-CAT for you to make some notes. Which sections of the MR-CAT did you perform best in? Which sections of the MR-CAT did you perform least well in? This can help you identify if there are areas of the consultation that you need to focus on more for your development.

1) INTRODUCTION – How well did I introduce the consultation and build initial rapport?		
Needs further development <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Vague introduction.</p> <p>Fails to establish initial rapport with the patient.</p> <p>Establishes the reason for the consultation but no attempt to explore what the patient wants from the consultation.</p> <p>Where other people are present in the consultation Pharmacy professional pays little or no attention to the patient and focuses on the other people present.</p>	<p>Clear introduction.</p> <p>Pharmacy professional introduces themselves by name and confirms the patient's identity.</p> <p>Attempts to build initial rapport but could improve by applying more welcoming approach and more open body language.</p> <p>Establishes the reason for the consultation and explores what the patient wants from the consultation.</p> <p>Where other people are present in the consultation Pharmacy professional establishes who the patient is and acknowledges them. Focuses the communication on the patient and the other people present.</p>	<p>Clear introduction.</p> <p>Pharmacy professional introduces themselves by name, explains their role and confirms the patient's identity.</p> <p>Welcoming introduction with open body language which helps to build initial rapport.</p> <p>Establishes the reason for the consultation, explores what the patient wants from the consultation and reaches mutual agreement on the purpose and aims of the consultation.</p> <p>Where other people are present in the consultation</p> <p>Pharmacy professional establishes clearly who the patient is and their relationship to the other people present. Manages the consultation effectively with all parties, with the main focus on communicating with the patient.</p>
Notes:		
2) GATHERING INFORMATION AND IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS – How well did I identify the patient's medicines and/or health needs?		
Needs further development <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Demonstrates a closed approach to information gathering with limited opportunity for the patient (or the others present) to offer their ideas, concerns and expectations. Poor demonstration of active listening.</p> <p>Medicines focused with no exploration of external factors (social, etc).</p> <p>Patient's agenda is not explored as the discussion evolves or is not acknowledged. Discussion remains pharmacy professional-centred.</p>	<p>Applies open and closed approaches to exchange information (involving all people present). May benefit from a more open approach to active listening.</p> <p>Establishes patient's ideas, concerns and expectations. Could benefit from exploring these further.</p> <p>Identifies external factors which influence health and medicines but may benefit from exploring these further.</p> <p>Patient's agenda is explored as the discussion evolves. Could improve by incorporating and balancing the patient's agenda with the pharmacy professional's agenda to demonstrate partnership.</p>	<p>Applies an open approach to encourage exchange of information (involving all people present). Demonstrates active listening.</p> <p>Establishes understanding and explores patient's ideas concerns and expectations.</p> <p>Uses a holistic approach to explore and discuss external factors which may influence health and medicines use.</p> <p>Encourages the patient to be an equal partner in the discussion. Patient's agenda is fully explored, and differences between the patient's agenda and the pharmacy professional's agenda are acknowledged and discussed.</p>

Notes:		
3) SHARED DECISION MAKING – How well did I engage the patient in establishing and taking ownership of a management plan?		
Needs further development <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Demonstrates a counselling or 'telling' approach. Pharmacy professional directed decisions and no discussion of options, eg, 'What you need to do is...' Pharmacy professional-centred management plan with little/no negotiation with the patient (or others present).	Works in partnership with the patient (and others present) to discuss options and negotiate a mutually acceptable plan that respects the patient's agenda and preference for involvement. Summarises the management plan clearly and concisely but could benefit from checking understanding of the plan with the patient (and others present).	Works in partnership with the patient (and others present) to discuss options. Whenever possible, adopts plans that respect the patient's autonomy. When there is a difference of opinion, the patient's autonomy is respected and a positive relationship is maintained. Summarises the management plan clearly and concisely, and checks understanding of, and agreement to, the plan with the patient (and others present).
Notes:		
4) CLOSURE – How well did I negotiate an effective closure to the consultation, including discussing safety netting strategies?		
Needs further development <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Concludes the consultation abruptly with no safety net or opportunity for patient (or others present) to ask further questions.	Offers a safety net and the opportunity for further questions. Clear safety-net plan described but could benefit from more input from the patient (or others present).	Checks expectations of outcomes and next steps with the patient (and others present). Agrees a safety-net plan and ensures all questions from the patient (and others present) are addressed.
Notes:		
5) CONSULTATION BEHAVIOURS – Overall summary of consultation behaviours that form the structure of the consultation, power versus partnership, and therapeutic relationship		
Needs further development <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Overall the consultation structure and discussion are led by the pharmacy professional's agenda and are one-directional. Language, tone, body language and attitude may reflect signs of hierarchy from the pharmacy professional.	Clear structure although may appear rigid due to pharmacy professional addressing their own agenda before that of the patient (or others present). Overall good balance of discussion with the patient (and others present). Offered the opportunity to contribute.	Structure is clear and the pharmacy professional summarises to guide the discussion while allowing flexibility for the patient's agenda. Overall a balanced equal discussion is established between the pharmacy professional and patient (and others)

<p>Pharmacy professional focused on their own goals with little opportunity for the patient (or others present) to contribute.</p> <p>Use of jargon or inappropriate language.</p> <p>Outcomes are pharmacy professional-centred.</p>	<p>Good demonstration of active listening skills although may disconnect at points to write notes without pause in the discussion.</p> <p>Only minor points of jargon or inappropriate language.</p> <p>Outcomes are person-centred but may be led by the pharmacy professional.</p>	<p>present) to demonstrate partnership. Patient (and others present) engaged throughout.</p> <p>Good demonstration of active listening skills, empathy and appropriate language for the patient.</p> <p>Outcomes are negotiated and person-centred.</p>
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OVERALL SELF- ASSESSMENT

Needs further development <input type="checkbox"/>	Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>
Fails to demonstrate relevant criteria. Pharmacy professional-centred.	Demonstrates criteria at a competent level. Person-centred.	Demonstrates criteria to a high level. Person-centred.

STRENGTHS

MY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS