

8. Patient–Clinician Relationship

Related Core CFI Question: 16 Some of the core CFI question are repeated below and are marked with an asterisk (*). The CFI question that is repeated is indicated in brackets.

GUIDE TO INTERVIEWER: *The following questions address the role of culture in the patient–clinician relationship with respect to the individual’s presenting concerns and to the clinician’s evaluation of the individual’s problem. We use the word **culture** broadly to refer to all the ways the individual understands his or her identity and experience in terms of groups, communities or other collectivities, including national or geographic origin, ethnic community, racialized categories, gender, sexual orientation, social class, religion/spirituality, and language.*

The first set of questions evaluates four domains in the clinician–patient relationship from the point of view of the patient: experiences, expectations, communication, and possibility of collaboration with the clinician. The second set of questions is directed to the clinician to guide reflection on the role of cultural factors in the clinical relationship, the assessment, and treatment planning.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE PATIENT: I would like to learn about how it has been for you to talk with me and other clinicians about your [PROBLEM] and your health more generally. I will ask some questions about your views, concerns, and expectations.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PATIENT:

1. What kind of experiences have you had with clinicians in the past? What was most helpful to you?
2. Have you had difficulties with clinicians in the past? What did you find difficult or unhelpful?
3. Now let’s talk about the help that you would like to get here. Some people prefer clinicians of a similar background (for example, age, race, religion, or some other characteristic) because they think it may be easier to understand each other. Do you have any preference or ideas about what kind of clinician might understand you best?
4. *Sometimes differences among patients and clinicians make it difficult for them to understand each other. Do you have any concerns about this? If so, in what way? [RELATED TO CFI Q#16.]

GUIDE TO INTERVIEWER: *Question #5 addresses the patient–clinician relationship moving forward in treatment. It elicits the patient’s expectations of the clinician and may be used to start a discussion on how the two of them can collaborate in the individual’s care.*

5. What patients expect from their clinicians is important. As we move forward in your care, how can we best work together?

QUESTIONS FOR THE CLINICIAN AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

1. How did you feel about your relationship with the patient? Did cultural similarities and differences influence your relationship? In what way?
2. What was the quality of communication with the patient? Did cultural similarities and differences influence your communication? In what way?
3. If you used an interpreter, how did the presence of an interpreter or his/her way of interpreting influence your relationship or your communication with the patient and the information you received?
4. How do the patient’s cultural background or identity, life situation, and/or social context influence your understanding of his/her problem and your diagnostic assessment?
5. How do the patient’s cultural background or identity, life situation, and/or social context influence your treatment plan or recommendations?
6. Did the clinical encounter confirm or call into question any of your prior ideas about the cultural background or identity of the patient? If so, in what way?
7. Are there aspects of your own identity that may influence your attitudes toward this patient?