

Remote Consulting (Lessons of the week)

8. Efficiency Tips For Remote Consultations

In this final instalment, here's some tips on how to be as productive as you can be. Remember, it's not just about speed - a longer telephone consultation dealing with a few problems to everyone's satisfaction is more efficient in the long run than a series of shorter consultations addressing only one problem at a time.

Try to strike a good balance of being an empathic listener versus efficiently working through an ever growing list of calls

- Don't "overcook" it - if the problem is straightforward and everyone is happy with your plan don't over complicate it
- Ask only the questions you want answering - and decide if you really want an answer to "was there anything else we can do for you?"
- If you ask something and it doesn't really add any value to today's decision, make a note not to ask it again (e.g. do pain scores tell you anything, other than what someone's pain threshold is like?)
- Make an early reference to the information you have already been given, or the most recent encounter, so they don't feel the need to start the conversation with "well it all started in 1974...")
- Use a headset so you can type hands free as you go if you can do this safely - and quietly - at least to make a note of key information (BP readings, phone numbers)
- If they are too hard of hearing / confused to get anywhere consider bailing out and arranging a F2F early on (rather than a 25 minute phone call shouting down the phone, only to bring them in anyway)
- Ask yourself - has everything immediately serious or worrying been excluded, if it has then you may need to practice winding up a call politely (be firm but fair on yourself and subsequent patients) if you recognise that today's business is addressed and a call is going nowhere.