

Examining a patient

Mr Davis carries out a physical examination of the patient.

Pre-watching

- 1a** Now that you have a fairly detailed picture of the patient, Ted Margolis, and his symptoms, compile a list of investigations you expect Mr Davis to carry out during the physical examination.
- 1b** Use the list you compiled for Exercise 1a to add more items to the checklist below. Include points on the medical and communication aspects of the examination.
- During the physical examination, the doctor
- 1 washed his hands thoroughly. YES/NO
 - 2 explained instructions clearly. YES/NO
 - 3 kept the patient informed. YES/NO
 - 4 palpated the area. YES/NO

Global observations

- 2a** Watch the whole clip and evaluate the doctor's ability to carry out a physical examination effectively, using the checklist from Exercise 1b.
- 2b** Compare your initial impressions. What might *you* have done differently?
- 2c** How did the doctor manage his voice during the examination, and what effect did this have on the patient?

Watching for detail

Part 1: from *Start* to *Are you comfortable like that, Ted? Yes, that's fine.* (00:00>01:01)

- 3a** Watch Part 1 of the clip. As you watch, concentrate on the investigations carried out by the doctor and then discuss these questions.
- 1 From a social as opposed to a medical perspective, why did the doctor start by examining the patient's hands?
 - 2 Why does the doctor give a rationale for certain investigations?
- 3b** Rewrite this instruction given by Mr Davis to make it clearer: *I'm gonna get you lying up on the couch.*

- 3c** Is the following question suitable or unsuitable for this particular patient? Why?

... so you might feel more comfortable if you've got an empty bladder. Do you need to have a pee first of all?

- 3d** In your culture / professional environment, how suitable would it be to use the equivalent expression in your language with an adult?
- 3e** Rewrite the instruction in Exercise 3c, making it more suitable for this patient.

Part 2: from *So if you just look up at the ceiling for me ... to ... round gently.* (01:01>01:57)

- 4a** Watch Part 2 of the clip and complete the dialogue.

Doctor: So if you just look up at the ceiling for me. That's great. If you _____
_____ for me now. And pop it back in again. And now _____
_____ feel for any glands at the _____
_____ your neck. That's fine.

Patient: What do you mean, you didn't find any?

Doctor: There are none there. No, I can't feel anything. That's fine. What I'd _____
_____ now is just examine your stomach, OK? Can you tell me _____ it hurts?

Patient: It's right in there, doc.

Doctor: Alright, so I'll be _____
_____ when I'm pressing on there. What I'm going to do is just _____

_____. Could you tell me _____ at all?

- 4b** Answer these questions.

- 1 What evidence is there that the patient trusts the doctor during this experience?
- 2 What is the significance of the expression *for me* and what impact might it have on the doctor's rapport with the patient?

Part 3: from *Could you tell me if it hurts at all?* to End.
(01:57>03:30)

5a Watch Part 3 of the clip and complete the dialogue.

Doctor: Could you tell me if it _____
_____ ?

Patient: Yeah.

Doctor: That's quite _____ ,
_____ ? I'm gonna press a
little bit harder now. So again, _____
_____ it's too
uncomfortable.

Patient: That's fine. Oh, oh.

Doctor: That's _____ painful, is it? I'm
sorry. But alright over here?

Patient: Yeah.

5b Look at the exchanges in Exercises 4a and 5a and comment on the way the doctor demonstrates active listening skills at each stage of the dialogue. Share your thoughts with the rest of the group.

5c Answer these questions.

- 1 Look again at this sentence: *Could you tell me if it hurts at all?* What is the significance of the expression *at all*? Watch again and note down the intonation pattern of this expression.
- 2 Should the patient take the expressions *that's great* / *that's fine* / *that's good* literally? Why (not)?

Post-watching

- 6 How does the doctor ensure the patient's dignity is maintained right up until the end of the examination?

Over to you

The patient in this clip was very compliant; the ideal patient. Some patients find the physical examination unpleasant and need lots of reassurance and encouragement.

Compile a bank of expressions that you might find useful in dealing with different patient types, for example: the timid patient, the body-conscious patient and the aggressive patient. You may wish to think about cases you have dealt with yourself or read about.

Choose one of the patient types and take turns to role-play a difficult part of the physical examination, where you are having problems getting the patient to comply.