



DOES MY FAMILY DOCTOR TEACH?

YES! Your family physician is one of more than 275 family doctors at Memorial University who teach medical students in their practice.

WHAT IS A CLINICAL CLERK?

A clinical clerk is a final-year medical student from Memorial University.

For the first two years in medical school, students go to classes, attend small groups to discuss cases, and go to lectures and labs. During this period, medical students go out into doctors' offices for a short time to learn what family doctors do. In their third year, students learn mostly by seeing patients in many settings, such as hospital and doctors' offices. These are referred to as clinical rotations, and the student is called a clinical clerk.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT...

YOUR DOCTOR...



IS A TEACHER

Answers to your questions about clinical clerks



Discipline of Family Medicine

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE STUDENT IN MY FAMILY DOCTOR'S OFFICE?

The student is there mostly to learn basic skills.

They started learning these skills in the first two years of medical school. In your family doctor's office, they may ask you about the problem that you came into the office for – this is called taking a history. They can do a physical exam, and they will talk to your family doctor about what they think the problem is (the diagnosis) and how it can be treated.

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF CARE THAT A CLINICAL CLERK CAN PROVIDE?

Clinical clerks have very basic responsibilities under the supervision of your doctor.

A clinical clerk does not have their medical degree (MD). They have to be supervised closely by their preceptor who is your physician. They can talk to your family doctor to decide what is done.



WHEN SHOULD MY FAMILY DOCTOR BE IN THE ROOM?

Clinical clerks learn best if they get to see you first and when they are observed. They need to learn how to ask the right questions, and to decide what physical exam is right for you. Often, your family doctor will ask the student to see you first. The student and your family doctor will discuss the student's findings and, before your leave the office, you will be seen by your family physician.

A nurse, or your family doctor, should be present for any breast exam, pap test, rectal or testicular exam.

This is for your comfort as well as to ensure the student is observed during these exams. It is very important for all medical students to learn these important skills. Your family doctor may observe the clerk doing other parts of your visit as well.



CAN I REFUSE TO SEE A CLINICAL CLERK?

Yes, you can refuse to see the student.

Clerks think it is a privilege to work with your family doctor. They know there will be times that you may have problems you wish only to discuss with your family doctor. The students will always respect your choice, and treat your problems with care and respect. This is a very important part of the student's learning. Their visit with you is confidential; the same as when you see your doctor.

WHAT IF I DO NOT WANT TO SEE A STUDENT PHYSICIAN OF THE OPPOSITE GENDER?

All physicians need to learn to show respect and be sensitive to all patients, so we try very hard not to limit the learning students receive. We do respect that you, as a person, may not want to see a clerk of the opposite gender and would encourage you to let your receptionist or family doctor know if this is the case. We are, however, trying to train all of our students to be caring and sensitive, so seeing patients for all types of problems is needed. Your help with this is very much appreciated.

WHAT DOES THE STUDENT ADD TO MY DOCTOR'S PRACTICE?

The student can help your family physician answer questions by doing medical searches, writing a project, doing a chart review-all of which can improve the care that you get from your family doctor. Students can help with immunizations, pap tests, counseling patients about smoking and alcohol, and they can increase the role that your family doctor has in the area of health promotion and disease prevention.

Students bring questions and resources to your family doctor's office. Physicians who teach often enjoy their practices more than doctors who do not teach. Your doctor may be trying to get students to come and practice in your area when they have completed their training. Your doctor may also feel a strong sense of duty to return some teaching to the medical school as a way of thanking the school.

By helping to educate the next generation of doctors, you are shaping the future of health care.

If you have any questions or concerns about the clinical clerk, please talk to your office's receptionist or your family doctor. From time to time, you may be asked to complete a form which helps to track how well the clinical clerk did while they were seeing you. Your help is very much appreciated.

Students stay the time they spend with family doctors in their office is one of the best ways they learn during medical school.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN!