

Training Student Doctors

Background

Students training to become doctors spend six years at Cambridge University. The first three years involve learning about the science of medicine (the Pre-Clinical Course). Once they have gained a degree in medical science they are allowed to start their practical training to become fully qualified doctors (the Clinical Course). This takes another three years, most of which is spent on hospital wards or in GP surgeries learning from patients. During this time students learn how to talk to patients, to examine them and how to apply their scientific knowledge to help people who are ill. Although students are not qualified actually to treat people at this stage, the opportunity to meet real patients is essential for their training.

When do students come to the surgery?

Student doctors from Cambridge University spend time in GP surgeries at various points in their training, from their first months as a student right through to their final year.

How could this affect me?

Sometimes students will be sitting in with the doctor when you visit the surgery. If so you will be asked if you are happy for them to be present during your consultation. You may also be asked whether the student can talk to you first, before you see your doctor. If so you will always get to see your doctor afterwards. The students will tell you whether they are junior students, just starting their training, or whether they are senior students close to qualifying as doctors.

Will student doctors be able to read my medical records?

As part of the health care team looking after you, student doctors will have access to your medical records. This is important for their training and they are bound by the same rules of confidentiality as qualified doctors. In common with all GP practices we regularly audit the quality of our service. Student doctors helping with this process may need to find some information from patients' medical records. As part of their training students are also sometimes asked to look at test results and prescriptions.

What happens if I am unhappy about any of this?

We fully understand if you would rather not see a student doctor or do not want a student doctor to see any of your medical information. If this is the case please just tell a receptionist, the practice manager or your GP.

Can I change my mind if I feel uncomfortable with a student doctor?

If you agree to see a student doctor, but then feel uncomfortable about it, please feel free to change your mind at any time. Your GP will be perfectly happy about this.

Are there other ways that I might be asked to help?

When student doctors are learning about a particular illness, it is very helpful for them to meet patients who have experience of that condition. Your doctor might want to invite patients who have suffered from illness into the surgery, or ask if they mind students visiting them at home. We are always very grateful to patients who do feel able to help, but fully understand that not everyone wants to be involved in this way. If your GP does ask for your help and you feel uncomfortable about it, please feel free to say so as they will quite understand.

Please be reassured:

No-one will be in the least bit upset if you do not want student doctors involved in your care and this does not affect your treatment in any way.

Where can I get more information about this?

If you would like more information, or have any comments or complaints about student teaching, please speak to your GP or your practice manager.

Thank you