

## Investigation

# 2.2: The Medical History

Once your patient shared their **Chief Complaint**, your **investigation** is about to begin. You must learn everything you can about your patient, starting with their personal **medical history**. You must ask many questions and the patient must answer honestly in order for you to have the best chance of solving their medical mystery.

You need to know their actual age and **gender** because many diseases occur most often within an age group or are somewhat gender specific. Some diseases occur mostly in children; others mostly in early adulthood. Still other diseases occur most often later in life. Some diseases occur only in men while others occur mainly or only in women. Some people look older than their age due to their **lifestyles**; others look younger than their age because of their **genetic** luck.

You want to explore your patient's current medical status. What other medical problems do they have? Have they recently seen another doctor for the same reason? Were they given **medicines** for this problem by another physician? You need this information to know the patient's assessment of their **current condition** isn't **altered** by the medicine. You would like to know what has worked or not worked in the past if the patient has been treated for a similar condition before. You don't want to give them more of the same medicine and cause an **overdose**. Finally, it would be helpful to know if their recent condition relates to their **Chief Complaint**; is the problem **acute** or **sub-acute**?

Now that you understand the patient's current status, delving into their medical history can provide additional useful information. What diseases in their past might affect their health today or in the future? Have they undergone treatments having **long-term side effects**? Do they **bleed** easily? Have they ever had **surgery**?

Finally, don't forget to ask about their "family history". Your awareness of diseases such as diabetes and cancer in other members of your patient's family is vital. These diseases can increase the risk of occurrence in your patient as well.

Is there anything else you should know about? Don't allow your patient to decide what is important; you must decide! Your patient may not know how one disease affects another; but you understand because of your medical training and experience treating other patients as you developed your medical "**art**" and "**judgment**".

Look at the two sample patients on the following pages. They provide basic information about the patients' current complaints and their medical histories. There may be more questions you wish to ask to learn more about things in their history that might be important in evaluating their current health status.