

Investigation

2.3: Review of Systems

Let's take a moment to review what we have accomplished so far. Your patient has told you about their current complaint. You now need learn about their overall health; that means any medical condition for which they have been treated in the past. You need to know what medicines they take and what types of surgery they may have undergone previously. You also want to know what diseases their parents had, just in case the disease is passed on to the next generation. It is important to put all that information together in a way that the important **positives** don't get forgotten. You review it in detail with the patient to ensure they did not forget important past medical events that could impact the medical recommendations you make for them.

Doctors classify medical facts as either positives or negatives. **Positives** mean 'yes', **Negatives** mean 'no'. You don't want to keep seeing information that will not help you investigate a problem, so you only write down the Positives unless you discover a negative that helps you rule out something in your **differential diagnosis**.

As you discuss their medical history with your patient you create the patient **chart**. The chart is the record about that patient. Every patient has a chart. It allows you, the doctor, to quickly see what you know about your patient when they come back the next time for **follow-up** or a new problem. No doctor can remember every detail about every patient they have ever seen. You have the patient's chart to review what happened in the past so you can see how that patient's health changes over time.

When you write in the patient's chart the positives of the medical history it is fine to abbreviate, as you do when you take Cornell Notes. Saving time is important to both the patient and doctor. When you have ten patients waiting to see you and you are late to a meeting at the hospital, you understand the importance of abbreviating. It is just like when your teacher shows a PowerPoint® presentation, and you and the teacher both have to wait for that one student who doesn't take Cornell Notes and is writing every word. It just messes things up and gets you further behind schedule.