

**Play dough,  
Barbie dolls and  
Bubble wrap -**

**Learning aids for the tricky stuff in  
general practice**

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## **Abstract:**

Ever struggled with remembering the attachments of the rotator cuff? Can't remember the difference between a macule and a papule? Do you forget which contraceptive pills do what in terms of benefits and side effects? Or have you noticed how a doctor's brain turns off when ever they are presented with a rash, and how they suddenly forget how to take a history before trying to make a diagnosis?

Well worry no more!

Nicola Holmes, medical educator with North Coast GP Training has developed a number of simple but brilliantly effective learning aids to assist registrars (and their trainers) to remember some of the more difficult to retain, yet important medical information.

Through ingenious use of play dough, barbie dolls, rainbows, bubble wrap and textas (not to mention her own children at times), Nicola will demonstrate her simple, cheap and effective learning aids to assist in teaching and learning about dermatology, musculo-skeletal medicine, and women's health.

## Article

As Medical Educators we all are continually striving to improve our delivery of medical education. The key to a successful teaching session is not whether the audience stays awake but whether they remember and recall the vital points so their own practice is changed for the better. We teach our registrars that patients remember 3 points only from any consultation, so it is quite an ask to expect our registrars to remember all the experience and knowledge we try to impart in a 3 hour teaching session. Techniques that incorporate visual as well as auditory cues are particularly useful and in this GPET session the following tools will be demonstrated. (if they suit your teaching style or needs please feel free to use!)

When discussing contraception, the use of dolls dressed in varying contraceptive devices as fashion accessories provides a visual picture for registrars to recall, while at the same time getting them to think about the woman's stage in life when prescribing for her contraceptive needs. The young (nulliparous) barbie Barbara is donned with OCP bikini, Implanon hoopla skirt and a condom hair tie. Post Partum Polly wears IUD earrings, Implanon armbands and a minipill necklace. Peri menopausal Patricia has a go slow 20 speed limit sign to advise on lower oestrogen doses, and also wears Implanon and Mirena and a Nuva ring necklace.

The issue of progesterone content and cardiovascular risk is also a confusing and daunting area that can be visually simplified by using coloured paper with progesterone types printed on them and then graded from levonogestrol green to the third generation progesterones as red, with green being best for your heart (but worse for your skin) and red being worse for your heart (and best for your skin).

Dermatology is a mountainous topic that registrars always are hungry for teaching in. With basic registrars it is essential they develop a general approach to dermatology rather than feeling the need to be able to make a spot diagnosis. LISTONS is a useful acronym for remembering to take

a history before trying to guess a diagnosis, and also is a framework to take that history. L is for how LONG has the rash or lesion been there. I is for how ITCHY it is. S is for where did it start. T is for what treatments have you already tried, and what effect did they have. O is for have you been overseas recently. N is for anything NEW (eg medication, vitamins, creams, nail polish, shampoos, soaps, washing powders, plant, sexual partners etc) and S is for anyone else with similar rash and could this be a SYSTEMIC disease?. It is useful to show a slide with the registrars working through the LISTONS history and then do the same slide again with different answers to illustrate that with the same picture you diagnosis and management could change with the history.

Nomenclature of skin lesions is also a difficult area to teach of lists on PowerPoint slides. An alternative is to make up physical models of various terms using different sized bubble wrap, card, textas etc. Registrars are given one each and as a group they have to put all the different models to match up with their names.

For examining dermatology patients we need to train our registrars that skin goes everywhere, and to examine it you need to look everywhere. The song heads and shoulders knees and toes can be used, but substituting "scalp and mouth, nails and soles" to illustrate the areas of skin not to overlook. (this also gets everyone up and moving, another essential part of a teaching session)

Musculoskeletal anatomy is a dry topic that is brought to life with coloured play dough, particularly useful for the shoulder joint where registrars can place the rotator cuff muscles onto the bony attachments of a model (donated of course by our friendly reps) and it is then becomes obvious which muscles are involved in internal and external rotation. (play dough recipes are on jars of cream of tartar in your local supermarket)