

How do you define “Psychosocial Assessment” versus “Psychosocial Counseling/Support?”

We hear about these terms a lot in the genetic counseling field, but they can be hard to define. For the UAB Genetic Counseling Program, please use the following to help clarify these terms. We hope that the following may help answer questions that supervisors or students may have during a rotation. Please don't hesitate to call us with additional questions.

CROSS-ROTATION OBJECTIVES			
Role	Beginning student should be able to:	Intermediate student should be able to:	Advanced student should be able to:
Psychosocial assessment	Identify and record basic elements of psychosocial assessment (e.g. marital status, occupation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation 1/2 skill 	Recognize and record more detailed elements of psychosocial assessment (e.g. unresolved grief, fear, anger) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation 3/4 skill 	Develop and discuss a plan with patients for needed psychosocial work (e.g. referral, decision-making tools) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation 4/5 skill
EXAMPLES			
(Note: These examples are not exhaustive. Many more great examples of how to demonstrate these skills are possible.)			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How are you related to each other?” • “Do you have a close relationship with him/her?” • “Was this a planned pregnancy?” • “Has anyone in your family been tested before? Would they be willing to share their result?” • “How recently was he/she diagnosed?” • “Does the family talk openly about the diagnosis?” 	For this category, this needs to be recognized or recorded (not necessarily discussed with the patient) – so these can be reflected in conversation with the supervisor or in written reflection on the logbook case report. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It seemed like this diagnosis brought up lots of emotions.” • “I imagine this was especially hard since no one else in their family had this and/or they had never heard of this condition before.” • They seemed to be consumed by anxiety/grief/overwhelmed, etc.” • “He really struggled with opening up.” • “She seemed really worried about getting cancer.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I imagine that it’s hard to be the caretaker for X, and that sometimes you might need some support as well. Do you have someone who you can talk to about what you’re going through?” • “It seems like you’re not comfortable making this decision today. What can I do to help you feel more comfortable making the best next step for you? What is factoring into your decision?” • “In the past few weeks have you felt sad/depressed? Are you having a hard time sleeping? How often do you cry? Have you had a change of appetite or ability to concentrate? I wonder if you might be helped by talking with a psychologist?” • “Some people find it helpful to talk to others in a similar situation. Would you like me to give you some information about a local support group or the website for the national online support group?”

CROSS-ROTATION OBJECTIVES

Role	Beginning student should be able to:	Intermediate student should be able to:	Advanced student should be able to:
Psychosocial support/counseling	Build alliance with patient/family; use empathic statements appropriately. • Rotation 1/2 skill	Discuss clinical information while assessing client’s reaction and gauge understanding of information; use psychosocial strategies to address client needs (e.g. build self-esteem). • Rotation 3/4 skill	Discuss clinical information while making psychosocial assessment of the client’s reaction/understanding and then helping the client/family integrate the information into his/her life; integrate psychosocial activities with other activities of the GC session; use advance psychosocial strategies (e.g. confrontation). • Rotation 4/5 skill

EXAMPLES

(Note: These examples are not exhaustive. Many more great examples of how to demonstrate these skills are possible.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “That’s a very common question/ thought.” • “I’m so sorry to hear about your father.” • “How is your (affected) relative doing now? How is his/her health?” • “I know this is difficult to hear.” • “Thank you for sharing that with me.” • “You are doing the right thing by bringing her here today.” • “Your story does sound frustrating.” 	<p>When giving clinical information, PAUSE & CHECK-IN with patient for reaction and/or understanding are both included in this category!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “It’s important to know that this didn’t happen because of anything you did or did NOT do.” • “How do you feel about explaining this to your spouse/child/family? What would you tell them? How do you plan on telling them?” • “It seems like this diagnosis has brought up lots of emotions. A lot of my patients feel overwhelmed or angry, etc. Is this how you feel?” • “You seem to have a strong relationship.” • “How does your family history affect your reaction?” • “You have been very quiet. I’m wondering what your thoughts or questions might be.” 	<p>For this category, statements would be woven throughout the discussion with the patient (not just a statement or reflection at one point during the session). These statements would also involve the larger context of the patient’s life – not just in the moment of the counseling session.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Have you told your family about your risks? What was their reaction? Would they be supportive of your decision?” • “How do you each usually deal with this kind of information as a couple? Do you each react or cope similarly or in different ways? How do you think this situation will be different/same?” • “I can see that having more children means a lot to you. I have a sense that you’re still trying to understand why this happened and if it can happen again. It seems like you will want to take some time to think about your plans. What questions do you have now about testing options?” • “We talked earlier about the inheritance pattern of this condition. What do you think this means for your family? For your siblings/ children when they grow up?” • “I know this information is going to mean your life will be different in many ways (ex: diet, appts, family planning, sibling relationships, etc). What do you think will be easy/hard for your family?”
--	---	---