

A PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING WOMEN'S HEALTH PROCEDURES

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Family Medicine Focus

Women's health procedures are central to family medicine. Inconsistency in procedural teaching can undermine learner confidence, patient trust, and teaching efficiency, particularly during intimate procedures. Educators must balance procedural instruction with communication, patient comfort, and trust. A simple, reproducible framework can help family medicine faculty teach women's health procedures safely, consistently, and in a patient-centered manner across learner levels.

A 7-Step Procedural Teaching Framework

1 Identify the Procedure and Context

Before entering the room, explicitly name the procedure (eg, Pap smear, IUD placement, vacuum-assisted vaginal delivery) and the setting (clinic, labor and delivery, operating room). This helps calibrate procedural complexity, available resources, and the appropriate level of supervision.

2 Assess Learner and Preceptor Readiness

Learners can be categorized as beginner, intermediate, or advanced to guide supervision. The preceptor should also confirm readiness to teach by ensuring adequate time, supervision capacity, and appropriate clinical conditions. Explicit entrustment decisions align with competency-based medical education principles.^{1,2}

3 Preprocedure Preparation

Before entering the patient room, the learner and preceptor briefly review indications, contraindications, key steps, instruments, setup, risks, benefits, alternatives, and anticipated challenges. This shared plan should include clear signals for when the learner should request assistance or when the preceptor should intervene, allowing appropriate supervision while maintaining patient trust.²

4 Patient-Centered Transparency, Consent, and Trauma-Informed Care

The learner explains the procedure in plain language, reviews risks and aftercare, discloses trainee participation with faculty supervision, and confirms consent. Transparent disclosure supports patient trust and is associated with patient acceptance of trainee involvement.³ Many women's health procedures involve intimate examinations, so educators should incorporate trauma-informed care principles, including explaining each step before it occurs, assessing patient comfort, and emphasizing that the patient may pause or stop the procedure at any time.⁴

5 Graduated Procedural Supervision

Supervision should match the learner's level of experience.¹

- **Beginner:** step-by-step guidance, demonstration as needed
- **Intermediate:** learner leads with targeted prompts
- **Advanced:** learner performs independently with faculty observation

6 Postprocedure Patient Communication

The learner communicates outcomes, expected recovery, return precautions, and follow-up plans, reinforcing patient-centered communication.

7 Immediate Debrief and Feedback

After leaving the room, conduct a short debriefing: what went well, areas for improvement, and goals for the next repetition. Timely feedback following direct observation supports deliberate practice and procedural learning.²

System Supports That Enhance Success

This framework is most effective when paired with standardized procedure kits, continuity with preceptors, repetition over time, and dedicated procedure clinics.⁵

Bottom Line

Teaching women's health procedures requires more than technical instruction. A structured, patient-centered approach that integrates preparation, communication, supervision, and reflection support learner development while maintaining patient comfort and trust.

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