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Building Patient History Skills

During a hand routine X-ray at Levelland, the patient walks into the room and I introduce myself and tell them that I will be taking an X-ray of their right hand while also making sure that was correct. The first thing I asked the patient was to verify their full name and date of birth. The patient sits at the end of the table and I asked them what happened. She told me, “while playing basketball in gym class, I went for the ball and hurt my pinky finger.” I asked her to point to me where the pain was so we could make sure to focus on that spot.

The X-ray order was for a hand because in Levelland when there is injury to the finger on a child, they like to look at all fingers on the X-ray. After taking a normal PA and oblique X-ray of the hand, I position her for a lateral. I choose to do the fan lateral since the patient complained of the pain being in the finger. After the exposure was made, the tech and I looked over the X-rays and I let the patient know we were all done and that we would send the images over to the radiologist.

I choose to ask the patient to show me where the pain was so I could determine whether to position for a fan lateral or a straight lateral. I also asked her what happened so I could add that into the report for the radiologist. In the report to the radiologist, we put, “the pain is in the 5th digit which happened from playing basketball.” Relaying this information to the radiologist made him know that he needs to focus on the 5th digit while reading over the X-ray. I also let him know what happened to the patient to cause the pain.

There are several more questions I should have asked during the procedure that would have benefitted the radiologist. Questions such as, “What does the pain feel like?, Does it hurt

anywhere else?, How long ago did this happen?”. If I would have not asked any of questions at all I would not have known the pain was in the 5th digit, so I would not have been able to relay that information to the radiologist and he would not have known to focus on that finger while reading the X-ray.

For my patient history skills, I would rate myself a 7 and this is due to my lack of knowledge on what to ask that would benefit the radiologist. What I could do better to learn what to ask is pay close attention to each tech and listen to the questions they ask and over time I will be able to build a complete patient history in just a normal conversation.