

Building Patient History Skills

For this assignment, I chose the two-view chest examination, which I have successfully completed a competency on. This exam evaluates the lungs, heart, and surrounding thoracic structures and is commonly ordered to assess conditions such as pneumonia, heart enlargement, or post-surgical changes. Understanding the patient's history is essential to ensure accurate positioning, exposure selection, and interpretation by the radiologist.

At my current clinical site, there is a protocol as to what questions are to be asked prior to performing the exam. To begin the exam, I interviewed my patient and asked the following questions: "Do you have a history of hypertension or diabetes?" "Have you ever been diagnosed with lung or heart disease?" "Any history of cancer or previous surgeries?" and "Are you a smoker?" Conditions such as COPD, congestive heart failure, and post-surgical changes can affect the appearance of the chest and how the radiologist interprets the image. Asking about smoking and prior lung or cardiac conditions helps determine whether findings like hyperinflation or scarring are chronic or new developments.

After obtaining this information, I relayed the patient's responses to the technologist, which they then documented for the radiologist. This information assists the radiologist by providing clinical context. If I had not provided an adequate patient history, the radiologist might misinterpret chronic findings as acute or overlook relevant changes.

In hindsight, one additional question I could have asked was whether the patient had any recent symptoms such as cough, shortness of breath, or chest pain, as these could further narrow the reason for the exam. Overall, I believe my patient interaction was thorough and professional. On a scale of 1 to 10, I would rate my patient history skills at an 8. I feel confident in my ability to obtain and communicate key information but plan to improve by asking more open-ended questions and tailoring my history to the patient's specific condition rather than relying solely on a standard set.

In conclusion, taking a complete and relevant patient history is critical for accurate radiologic interpretation. It improves communication within the healthcare team and helps ensure that the patient receives the best possible care.