

DEALING WITH INAPPROPRIATE PATIENTS

For their own health and safety, it is important for health professionals to develop a professional approach when dealing with patients who exhibit rude, aggressive, sexual, and other inappropriate behaviours.



1

DETERMINING IF THERE IS A "WHY"



Is the patient resentful of their treatment up till now?



Do they feel they have been listened to?



Do they feel you understand their problem?



If so, show them that you are actively listening to them, that you understand the symptoms they are describing and acknowledge their opinion.

2

IS THERE A MOTIVE



Are they trying to manipulate the situation for personal gain, e.g.



To obtain addictive pain meds?



To falsify a workers compensation claim?

It is important to set limits to what is discussed e.g. discussing actual symptoms rather than any emotional background. Do not respond to flattery.

3

INVOLVE YOUR COLLEAGUE

Call upon another health clinician to be involved if you suspect the possibility of:



Inappropriate sexual behaviour



Aggression



Or danger



If there has been a history of such behaviour in the particular patient, have a colleague or security on standby.

4

WHEN THE LINE IS CROSSED



If a patient has assaulted you (verbally, emotionally, physically or sexually) report the incident to your superiors, and to the police if appropriate. Take the time to discuss the event with someone and seek support and counselling if needed.

Consider your own well-being in every interaction with patients. It will allow you to continue to be the professional you were trained to be.