



Christmas greetings and medical student thank yous - Lucy Jenkins

Last week I had a lovely conversation with one of my trusty regular medical student patients. You know the type; limited ability to work and help others due to health issues, loves talking and meeting students and will whip out their stoma to show any student if asked. For three of my first year students last week, this was very exciting! Said patient described the pleasure she derived from knowing that she had had a positive role in their education and that she still had a Christmas/thank you card sent from a group of first years 7 years ago.

So if you have any spare cards floating round and you teach first or second years (or any year for that matter) you may wish to get your students to write one for those patients who gave up their time and shared their life stories. Or this can be put into a personalised text that the students can write using AccuRx if you are looking for a more sustainable approach.

Asking around, what the patients value most is specific information on how they contributed and how the students would use this moving forwards. For example, 'your top tip for always moving the table back was most useful and we shall be sure to do that throughout our careers'. Or 'it was very powerful and helpful you telling us how your GP told you of the diagnosis and we will remember to use simple terms and allow time to take things in'.

Researchers studying gratitude have found that saying thank you and expressing gratitude also benefits our own health and happiness. So we can make our students feel good and help to build trust and closer bonds with our helpful patients too.

If your medical students need convincing, then they can take a look [here](#). This is an article from the British Student Doctor journal titled 'Remember to thank the patient'. It is a reflection from a Cardiff medical student on the benefits of learning and developing empathy through unstructured conversations with patients. It discusses the importance of valuing the patient's role and how medical students can create positive experiences for our patients whilst developing as clinicians. It suggests that this also paves the way for future generations of medical students to learn from patients. It may or may not affect patients' willingness to participate in medical student teaching again, but it will hopefully put a smile on their face at Christmas.

