



How can we help teach our students skills to safely deal with uncertainty in general practice?



Ingham, G. (2024). To do or not to do: Teaching the skill of deciding what to do in the face of uncertainty. *Australian Journal of General Practice*, 53(12), 900–903. <https://doi.org/10.31128/AJGP-08-23-6949>



How can a GP teacher approach teaching the management of uncertainty (Ingham, 2024)

- Make explicit the paradigm shift between hospital medicine and primary care
- Normalise
- Demonstrate shared decision making
- Encourage safety netting
- Explore uncertainty by considering diagnostic options e.g. Murtagh's safe diagnostic model (Murtagh et al, 2022)
- Explore management options: The 3Rs



Could use Murtagh's Diagnostic Model to consider diagnostic options (Murtagh et al, 2022)

1. What is the probability diagnosis?
2. What serious disorders must not be missed?
3. What conditions are often missed (the pitfalls)?
4. Could this patient have one of the 'masquerades' in medical practice?
5. Is the patient trying to tell me something else?

Exploring management options: The 3Rs (Ingham, 2024)

1. Review (and reassure)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is a wait-and-see strategy safe?• If so, what follow-up and safety net instructions should be given?• What reassurance can be given at this stage?
2. Refer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pathology or imaging: What tests could be informative?• Which non-GP specialist could assist?• Which allied health practitioner could assist?
3. Rx (treat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What treatment could be considered (including non-pharmacological)?• Could a response to treatment aid a diagnosis?



Why demonstrate our thinking processes to students?

- Students have shared that they can't always recognise or understand the thinking process GPs are using, unless it is made explicit.
- In a pilot study we conducted in 2023, with the RACGP, where students learnt from registrars for 7 weeks and experienced GPs for 7 weeks:
 - Students highly valued learning from both, for different reasons
 - One of the main benefits they commented on when learning from experienced GPs was that they were more likely to encourage students to lead consultations
 - One of the main benefits they commented on when learning from registrars was that they had more visible clinical reasoning processes

References:

Ingham, G. (2024). To do or not to do: Teaching the skill of deciding what to do in the face of uncertainty. *Australian Journal of General Practice*, 53(12), 900–903.

Murtagh, J., Murtagh, C., Rosenblatt, J., & Coleman, J. (2022). *John Murtagh's General Practice* (Eighth ed.). McGraw-Hill Education LLC.