

Social work consult guide

Jan 31, 2019 | 0  | [onthephones](#)

Contributor: Rebecca Gleeson

Editor and Reviewer: Elizabeth Rowe

—

In a hurry? Make sure you know:

- Why you are referring the patient, urgency of the intervention required.
- What are the potential risks for the patient and/or family?
- The patient's next decision-maker - especially if the patient is confused or cognitively impaired.

—

What history should JMOs know/collect?

- Where and who does the patient live with? Are there any dependants, are they homeless?
- Is there any substance abuse?
- Are there any significant carer issues, e.g. patient is carer for someone?
- Any mental health concerns?
- Abuse and or trauma?

—

What examinations and investigations should JMOs perform/collect results of?

- Clarify how certain trauma has occurred, e.g. such as abnormal bruising - is this abuse?
- If the patient has been mentioned to have children - where are the children? Do you have concerns about their safety?
- Cognitive screening - is this acute or chronic?

What additional information would impress you?

- Be informed of the role of the social worker.
- Check if there has been previous social work involvement in the patient's history.
- Consent for social work intervention (this is not necessary in times of significant abuse).
- Referring to social work early so interventions can be timely.
- Communicating to social work regarding discharge planning and ensuring the patient has been cleared prior to discharge.
- What are the values of the patient - do they want treatment, how they want to be treated?

What are common mistakes/omissions made by JMOs?

- Elderly patients not having dependents at home.
- Patients with substance abuse - is this happening in front of children? What about their safety?
- End of life care - involve social work early to support patients and families through the dying process (social workers can assist with the difficult conversations, legal matters, supportive counselling).
- Informing patients and families that social work can provide certain supports without confirming accuracy, e.g. transport funding/Centrelink benefits.
- Asking social work to clarify if a patient has capacity to make decisions.

Helpful Resources

Australian Association of Social Workers - <https://www.aasw.asn.au/>

Tags: #cognitively impairment,#consult guide,#junior doctors,#mental health,#referral,#requesting a consult,#social work