

## POINTERS FOR EXAMPLE 6

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### Case studies written as stories



This document is intended for the educator to supplement the case study/story as an example of OPTEACHING.

The below are some pointers on how to make the most of Learning Opportunities presented by this example.

### How to turn a case study into a story

Whether you already have a written case study or are creating one based on a person you know or have known, these steps will help you to turn it into a story that will capture the attention of the learners with an ‘emotional hook’.

**Step 1: Create a profile** for the person keeping in mind the learning objective (e.g., delirium due to infection; decision to transgender later in life; Indigenous Australian with intergenerational trauma). Give the person a first, middle and last name. Even if you are basing this story on a real person you know; it is important to de-identify them by creating a pseudonym (i.e. false name). The profile should include information typically found in a person’s medical history (e.g., diseases, injuries, surgeries experienced throughout their life time; medications; mental health status) as well as social context (e.g., date of birth, gender identity, living arrangements, marital status, children, parents, SES). This can be a fun exercise using your imagination to create the perfect character for your story. Remember to not get too wrapped up in the clinical aspects of the character you are creating.

**Step 2: Map a timeline** of events for your character. The events should explain how the person got to the point that is your learning objective (see examples above). The timeline could begin at birth and contain major events contributing to the learning objective (e.g., Indigenous Australian with intergenerational trauma). The timeline could cover a short period of time and involve only the causes or factors contributing to the event that brought them into needing care (e.g., delirium due to infection). Remember every good story has drama, tears and laughter – but take care not to overload it with emotion.

**Step 3: Build a plot** with the profile and timeline to tell the story. Think of your character and the events of the timeline as if it were an episode in a soap opera or movie. There should be at least three scenes, paragraphs, parts of the story. The beginning, middle and end. The beginning allows the learners to emotionally connect with the character, get to know them and care about what happens to them. The middle part is the build-up to and the action packed ‘crisis’. The end is where the ‘rescuers’ arrive but the outcome is still unknown. Here are some tips on how to turn a clinical case study into a story.

- Begin with showing the learners about the person with a happy scene of their life before the crisis that eventually leads to the learning objective. With words, show how they behave, how they appear, their outlook on life (e.g., a couple going on a road trip all excited about seeing things and the urgency to get off the road before dark when kangaroos come out). End the scene with the learners feeling positive about the character and wanting to know what happens next!
- In the middle scene, show the crisis including the context or setting in which it takes place. There should be some build-up of suspense and tension toward the crisis (e.g., not wanting to get up early to get on the road again, then demanding they pull over to swim or walk through the town in a location they passed, when stopping for tea they order breakfast). End the middle scene in midst of the crisis with all of the support characters present.
- In the final scene, the character is getting help. Here is where the rescuer/medical professional provides the detailed clinical information the learner needs to solve the problem. It is important to NOT give the correct treatment or procedure as part of the story. End this scene as a cliff hanger. What is the best thing that could happen next?

**Step 4: Edit and proof read.** Have several other people read your story to check you have communicated the story in a way that is both engaging and educative. Make sure your story contains all the information for the reader to make the same conclusions as you have intended. Remember that as the writer you have more information about the learning objective than the learner has from merely reading the story.