

# Introduction

## Part 1

### Chapters

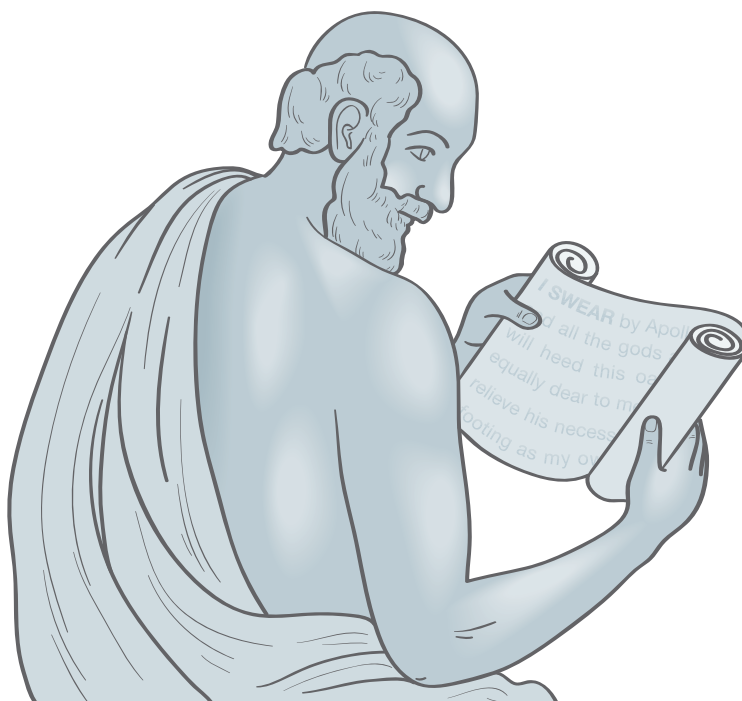
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## 1

# Overview of practical procedures

**Figure 1.1** Hippocrates: the father of medicine and author of the Hippocratic Oath.  
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**Figure 1.2** 1948 World Medical Association modern version of the Oath. Source: Davey (2014), Chapter 1, p. 2.

**A**t the time of being admitted a member of the medical profession:

- I* solemnly pledge myself to consecrate my life to the service of humanity;
- I* will give my teachers the respect and gratitude which is their due;
- I* will practise my profession with conscience and dignity;
- The* health of my patient will be my first consideration;
- I* will respect the secrets which are confided in me, even after the patient has died;
- I* will maintain by all the means in my power, the honour and the noble traditions of the medical profession;
- My* colleagues will be my brothers;
- I* will not permit considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics or social standing to intervene between my duty and my patient;
- I* will maintain the utmost respect for human life from the time of conception; even under threat I will not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity.
- I* make these promises solemnly, freely and upon my honour.

## What are practical procedures?

The **practical procedures** addressed in this book, and in the **online learning materials**, are a group of processes that medical practitioners are required to be **proficient** in.

Whilst these requirements may shift, varying with different regulatory bodies, Healthcare Trusts and local protocols, most of the included procedures are part of the current recommendation of required skills by the **General Medical Council (GMC)**.

## Why are they important?

Proficiency is required in order to contribute to **quality patient care** – facilitating the provision of a more beneficial clinical encounter for both the patient and the medical practitioner. Many of these skills are staple components of daily life in most hospitals, as they are required for the **diagnosis** and **management** of a vast range of medical conditions.

Furthermore, proficiency in these skills is part of the **current requirements** for doctors to gain their full medical registration.

## Using this resource

This book is best used when coupled with the **supplementary online learning materials**. Each chapter addresses a procedure or closely linked set of skills – **what** it is, **why** it is used, and several relevant **indications**, **contra-indications** and **complications**. As the focus of this resource is on assisting in the acquisition of skills, the information relating to indications, contra-indications and complications is by no means exhaustive. The contra-indications listed may be relative or absolute. Various other sources of information, some of which are included in the **Further reading and references** section at the back of the book, focus more fully on the pathology and medical settings of these procedures. In some skills, common **pathology** is also briefly mentioned to give some context to the procedure and its frequent findings. Most chapters include a **step-by-step** breakdown of how to perform the practical procedure. Most also include a **Hints and Tips** box with suggestions and important points to remember.

The chapters correspond to **self-assessment questions**, which are included both in the book and online. The majority of chapters also correspond to an **online video**, which shows in real time how to perform the practical procedure, and the equipment required to do so.

Proficiency in performing these procedures, as with any new skill, takes **time** and **practice**. **Repetition** is the key! Generally, it is preferable to **read** about the procedure and **how** to do it, and to then **watch** it several times, prior to attempting it yourself in a skills laboratory, if possible, before attempting it on a patient. Many skills laboratories have either low-fidelity or high-fidelity simulations to facilitate learning.

## General advice

Be sure to ask for **help** from your seniors and colleagues – they also had to learn once, and thus they will usually be happy to help.

Ensure that you are not interrupting his or her clinical commitments or affecting patient care, and if you are, it may be more suitable to ask someone else.

**Never** attempt a procedure on a patient if you do not feel confident or capable of performing it safely – it is not appropriate to feel coerced into clinical procedures you do not feel qualified to carry out. Ensure that you have enough self-awareness and confidence to be aware of not only your **capabilities** but also your **limitations**. Remember the **Hippocratic Oath** – first, do no harm (Figures 1.1 and 1.2)! Ensure that you also look after **yourself**. Take breaks, and ensure that you eat and drink regularly, particularly during long shifts. Also ensure that you **avoid injuring yourself** by adhering to ‘moving and handling’ protocols, such as using **slides**, **hoists** and **approved methods** for moving patients.

As will be covered in each of the following chapters of this book, ensure that you fully and correctly **identify** the patient, and **document** your actions in the relevant areas. Usually, this will mean in the **patient notes**, although for some procedures (e.g. cannulation), some hospitals will require this to also be included on the **medication chart**. Ensure that you also document procedures that you attempted that were **not successful** – do not feel embarrassed to do so.

In many situations, **site practitioners** or **nurses** may be able to perform the procedure. Whilst at times when you are very busy, this will be a blessing, ensure that you obtain **adequate experience** in performing them too. There is no substitute for **practice** – with it the procedures will become much easier, as your **confidence** grows.

Remember that many clinical settings have clear **guidance** and **protocols** available to assist in practical procedures. Ensure that you become familiar with these as soon as possible, as they will help both you and your patients. This book’s information on each practical procedure is included as guidance only – it is important to remember that **best current practice** constantly evolves, and it is the medical practitioner’s responsibility to keep up with any changes as they appear. Guidance is available online from resources such as the **GMC’s Tomorrow’s Doctors**.

Finally, everyone has periods of time when they lose confidence, and are unsuccessful in procedures that had previously been mastered. This will pass – perhaps after requesting guidance from a senior to improve technique, perhaps after confidence increases or perhaps simply after luck has improved! Everyone had to learn once – you are not the first person to have trouble removing that last little air bubble from that syringe. ...

### Hints and tips:



- **First, do no harm!**
- Don’t hesitate to ask for **help**.
- **Document** your actions – successful or otherwise.
- Take care to **not injure yourself** when **moving patients** – used approved **aids** and **methods**.
- Follow **local protocols**.
- **Keep up** with **best current practice**.