EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Running effective meetings: a primer for doctors

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This paper uses a series of exercises and practical examples to assist individuals and groups of doctors in training to gain skills in a critical area of management: conducting and participating in effective meetings. Through this paper, readers will be shown how to recognise and manage situations as they occur in meetings to work towards appropriate outcomes. By understanding the elements of conducting a meeting from preparation through to follow up, doctors will be able to conduct and participate more effectively in meetings that arise in their workplaces.

In 1999 a survey of USA physician leaders identified three sets of practical skills with the highest importance for emerging medical leaders: they were time management, communicating effectively, and managing meetings.¹ Several successful programmes were subsequently developed to improve these skills, particularly for junior academic faculty. As a result of one programme, improved retention rates resulted in savings in recruitment that were greater than the cost of that programme.² In recent times, the view that management skills were largely the domain of doctors seeking to be leaders or academics has shifted. The principles of the managerial sciences are now applied more broadly to the delivery of health care.³ In addition, the growing accountability that has accompanied quality and safety agendas in health care has changed the operating environments of most health care institutions around the world.⁴ Effective managerial skills have confirmed links to improved patient safety, health care quality, organisational effectiveness, and clinical decision making.^{5–11}

It has also been recognised that acquiring these skills can occur at varying stages of a doctor's career.¹² Basic managerial skills have been recognised as core competencies for doctors in training in the UK. For example, hospital doctors are expected in the first two years of work to "demonstrate leadership skills where appropriate but at the same time works effectively with others towards a common goal" and "encourage an atmosphere of open communication and appropriate directed communication within teams".¹³

This article uses a series of exercises and practical examples to assist individuals and groups of doctors to gain skills in conducting and participating in effective meetings. Readers will be shown how to recognise and manage situations as they occur in meetings to work

towards appropriate outcomes. By understanding the elements of conducting a meeting from preparation through to follow up, doctors will be able to conduct and participate more effectively in meetings that arise in their workplaces.

TYPES OF MEETINGS

A meeting can be defined as a "goal or outcome-directed interaction between two or more people that can take place in any of four ways: same time/same place; same time/different place; different time/same place; different time/different place". Same time/same place meetings are the most common in health care settings. They can be large (such as conventions), small (for example, ward rounds), formal (such as committee meetings), or informal (as in the case of corridor chats). The main feature of this type of meeting is that all participants are in the same place and the interaction is immediate and face to face. Participants are usually highly focused and the meeting runs to tight deadlines. Verbal interaction is an important component.^{14 15}

ROLE OF THE CHAIRMAN

The chairman of a meeting is responsible for a number of activities; some of which must be attended to before the meeting can be arranged. Before any meeting, a chairman must:

- identify and invite the appropriate participants
- familiarise themselves with any relevant history of previous meetings
- construct aims for the meeting
- conceptualise a framework for addressing issues coming to and arising from the meeting
- clarify roles of participants
- gather and circulate well ahead of time any pertinent existing data
- prepare meeting logistics (place, time, and resources)
- draft and circulate an agenda.¹⁶

The purpose of the meeting should be clear to the chairman before agreeing to arrange or chair a meeting.

Ideally, all the intended participants should be contacted by the chairman well in advance of the meeting and invited to attend after the purpose of the meeting has been explained to them. In subsequent meetings other meeting participants can be delegated to perform some of these responsibilities. In addition, there are several roles in a meeting that the chairman should delegate to other participants. These roles include: note taker and timekeeper. Depending on the situation and style of the meeting, one

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person may perform more than one role. Table 1 highlights the key meeting essentials.

AGENDAS

Agendas may vary depending on the purpose of the meeting and its level of formality. Generally speaking, a typical agenda should contain;

- the name of the group that is meeting
- the date of the meeting
- the name of the venue
- contact person (for registering intent to attend, apologies, or items for inclusion)
- apologies from people unable to attend
- introductions
- approval of previous meeting's minutes
- review of matters arising from previous meetings
- new business
- reports
- other business
- evaluation
- date of next meeting
- close

The order of items should be based on ensuring that the controversial and non-controversial items are interspersed. Starting with a few short and less important issues at the top of the agenda often allows the participants to settle into the meeting before tackling the more contentious items. If possible controversial items should be just before or just after scheduled breaks in the meeting. Establish time limits for each item on the agenda. Decide the length of the meeting and allocate a realistic time slot for each item. Do not try to do too much in a meeting. Generally speaking, items in meetings take longer than you expect so allow plenty of time.

A TYPICAL MEETING CYCLE

1. Introductions and ice breakers

An effective meeting has a structured order. It should start with introductions. A chairman should introduce himself first and set the tone for the rest of the introductions. For example:

"Hello, my name is Dr Lee and I'm your chairman for this meeting. I've asked you to come and meet here today to discuss a topic that I believe is very important to the effective running of our organisation. What I hope to achieve from this meeting is an understanding of the issues and to develop a series of steps we can take individually and as a committee to work towards the outcomes we wish to achieve. This meeting is scheduled for 1 hour and will finish exactly on time. At the end of the meeting we will decide if we should meet again and when. Could we now go around the room quite quickly and would everyone be prepared to tell us a bit about themselves, why you are here and what you might want to achieve in this meeting?"

2. Apologies and agenda

Apologies should be noted and then a quick review of the agenda and minutes of any prior meetings should be undertaken. Items requiring modification should be assessed to see whether they are procedural or substantive. If they are procedural they should be dealt with immediately and quickly. For example:

It is not uncommon for some people to say they have not received the agenda or previous minutes. Copies of both should be available at the meeting, but discussion of how that occurred should be deferred until after the meeting as it is usually an administrative issue that often requires individual not group attention.

Substantive issues, where they are relevant, may be referred to a particular item in the agenda. Otherwise they can be relegated to "Other Business" at the end of the meeting. It is important not to have a meeting hijacked by trivial issues on commencement. Conversely, trivialising someone's concerns at the outset may then make them less prepared to be an effective contributor to the meeting. It is a delicate balance. Understanding the way people operate in groups often helps. (See section on Behavioural Styles in Meetings).

3. Routine items

Technical rules for the meeting are the most important routine items and should always follow the introductions. Some issues need to be clarified at the outset, such as; what to do about mobile telephones and pagers; ensuring that participants on videoconferencing or teleconferencing are included; and how consensus will be achieved.

Major portions of most meetings are time sequenced and filled with routine announcements of past progress, decisions on current issues, and discussions of future prospects.¹⁷ Topics should be covered one at a time, starting with routine progress reports on ongoing projects. A participant who has particular expertise, or who has been assigned the task of presenting a topic, should do so first. Group discussion and a collective decision, if warranted, should follow.

Near the end of the meeting, to ensure that subsequent meetings are of high quality, the chairman should ask all participants at the meeting what they thought was effective and therefore repeated in future meetings; and what could be improved and changed for future meetings. As the meeting comes to a close the chairman should summarise areas of agreement and decisions that have been made, assign action items for group members, and highlight areas where consensus could not be reached. Follow up arrangements, such as circulation of minutes, review of action items, or details for another meeting should be made explicit at this time.

It is the responsibility of the chairman and the note taker to ensure that the minutes are completed and circulated within a reasonable time frame. The minutes may be written in a variety of ways, for example in point form or discursive paragraphs. Verbatim minutes are only used in formal situations. Modern meeting notes should concentrate on actions and agreements.¹⁸ However, all minutes should include the following:

- date, time, place of meeting, and list of participants present
- information that was shared at the meeting
- decisions that were made along with alternatives that were not chosen (without mentioning which attendees advocated each position), together with a brief summary of the main points for and against the decisions
- action items with each item assigned to one or more members and an expected completion date.¹⁹

MEETING DATE AND TIME

It is not easy to find a time for busy people to meet. Often, finding a meeting date and time is the most difficult part of the whole meeting process. For regular meetings, the easiest

Table 1 Meeting essentials

1. Chairman's checklist

Preparation:

What is the purpose of the meeting?
 consulting and getting feedback
 conveying and clarifying policy issues
 managing a crisis; generating ideas; giving information
 making decisions; motivating performance
 reporting and assessment
 planning
 reporting progress; setting targets and objectives
 setting tasks and delegating
 developing skills and solving problems
 introducing special subjects or guest speakers
 team building or training.

Do I have the agenda prepared and location arranged?

Am I familiar with the agenda and the venue?

Timing

How will I measure time efficiency in the meeting?

Do the agenda items have equal weight and require equal time?

Quality outcome

What are the meeting outcomes that I consider essential and for whom?

What outcomes measures will I judge the meeting by and be judged against?

Personal

What skills do I need to run the meeting effectively?

Do I have all these skills?

Rules of engagement

What are the "ground rules" for this meeting?

Examples of ground rules are: only one person to speak at a time,
 confidentiality of issues discussed within the meeting, meeting times will be
 adhered to, mobile phones to be switched off.

Contingency planning

What do I need to do if there is a less than optimal outcome?

Future

What implications are there for future meetings that I chair?

2. Expected life cycle of a typical meeting

Beginning

Chairman's introduction, explanation of purpose of meeting, and time allocated for meeting

Individual participant introductions

Apologies

Middle

Review of the agenda

Separation of agenda into routine and new items

Protocol for each item

One at a time

Designated presenter for each item

Group discussion

Decision on item

Follow up

Conclusion

Consensus on agreements and action

Unresolved issues: their future

Meeting evaluation

Delegation of follow up items

Meeting and minutes timetable

3. Meetings venue checklist

Agenda and minutes of the last meeting

Additional papers (for example, reference papers, reports)

– List of attendees

Paper and pens

Name badges (place cards optional)

Audiovisual equipment, for example computer, projection equipment, and flip charts

Catering and refreshments

Directions/signs

Heating and lighting controls

Table and seating layout

Timings

Location of toilets and emergency exits

way is to set dates on a particular day of the month, for example 8 30 am on the first Tuesday of the month, and have the participants agree to the schedule at the first meeting. Pre-planning meeting dates and times is a way of maintaining control to ensure well organised and well attended meetings.

When participants have to travel long distances to attend meetings it is useful to have pre-meeting refreshments available about 30 minutes before the actual meeting is due to start. Concentration begins to wane after about 45 minutes into meeting so frequent breaks should be scheduled into long meetings. Breaks do not need to be of equal length. Drink breaks and comfort stops can last anywhere from 5 to 20 minutes. Allow at least 45 minutes for the lunch break.

Times to start and finish a meeting depend on the type and duration of the meeting and the attendees' availability. In general, try to avoid times that can lead to problems. For example, meetings held in the middle of the day or at peak hour can result in participants spending a lot of their day travelling to and from the meeting. Similarly, breakfast and evening meetings are only a good idea if participants do not have family or other external commitments.

THE VENUE AND MEETING ROOM SET UP

Venue choice is critical for sensitive meetings, but far less so for routine gatherings. Wherever the meeting is held, the chairman should ensure that the venue is adequately prepared. If the venue has a venue manager or conference organiser it is important to talk with them about your needs before the meeting and even send them a written list of requirements. Arriving well before a meeting allows the chairman to check the set up. Conference organisers and audiovisual experts at the venue, even when well briefed, cannot know exactly what is required. Have the person responsible for the venue confirm your booking in writing. Always check and re-confirm the booking, providing final numbers, a few days before the meeting.

The set up of the room for the meeting will also have an impact on how the meeting runs. Positioning of tables and chairs is crucial to ensure that the chairman and all participants have the capacity to contribute when appropriate. If the purpose of the meeting is mainly to deliver presentations to a large group of people (over 20 people), a theatre style set up with the audience in rows facing where the speakers and audiovisual equipment will be situated is best. For a medium sized group (10–20 people) where the attention needs to be focused towards the front of the room a “mullet” (long back, short sides in a U shape) style may be most appropriate. Where the group is smaller in size (up to 10 people) and interaction is critical, a horseshoe (U shape) table layout with the open part of the “U” facing the chairman's table is best. For even smaller meetings, one rectangular table with the chairman in the middle of one of the longer sides will suffice.

The positioning of the chairman in relation to the group is important. If you are feeling confident and comfortable as a chairman and your authority is in no doubt, sitting close to or among the other participants is best. If the meeting is going to be challenging or has the potential to be out of control, your physical position as chairman should be separate to emphasise your authority. You might even choose to organise the placement of the participants beforehand by setting out place cards, this way you can influence the personal dynamic of the meeting.

Known adversaries are best placed where they will cause the least disruption, for example next to the chairman (where they can be overshadowed if necessary) or next to a “team

player” (to settle them down). Opponents should never be allowed to occupy the confrontational position; that is directly opposite the chairman as it may result in a destructive splitting of power and control.²⁰

Computers, data projectors, screens, and flip charts should be positioned where they can be used comfortably without obscuring the participants' view. Sitting in a selection of seats before the meeting allows the chairman to gauge the visibility for all the participants. Sometimes there are strong lights above the projection screen that cannot be switched off independently and due to glare may make visual material difficult to see. In such cases a plain white wall may be better than a poorly positioned screen. Extension leads and loose wiring should be taped to the floor or otherwise covered to prevent mishaps.

BEHAVIOURAL STYLES IN MEETINGS

When two or more people come together for the purpose of accomplishing a task, a range of behavioural variables come into play and problems may arise.²¹ By looking at different behavioural styles participants adopt in meetings, various ways of communicating can be understood. Behaviour is the “tip of the iceberg”. It is what we see of other people. Under the surface lies much more; genetic traits, personality, life experiences, and attitudes. These aspects are less dynamic than behaviour. Behaviour is changeable according to the situation. However, we all have a preferred style of behaviour that we routinely and comfortably adopt in certain settings. Through recognising our own needs and the needs of others as well as understanding how different behaviours may be perceived, we can modify our own approach to communicate more effectively.²²

A number of tools have been developed to describe different behavioural styles. The Myers Briggs model, for example, identifies a person's preferences for certain ways of thinking and behaving.²³ This model assesses personality types, which in turn affect behavioural styles. It is not very easy to determine which of the 16 Myers Briggs personality types fellow meeting participants fall into without a detailed conversation or completion of the Myers Briggs questionnaire.

A frequently used behavioural styles model is DISC, an acronym for the four styles it describes (Direct, Influencing, Steady, Conscientious). It can be used to help understand a person's preferred behavioural style and the interplay between the preferred focus (task or relationship) and the preferred pace at which a person operates (fast or considered). Based on the work of Marston and Geier,²⁴ DISC is quick and simple instrument to apply and is therefore described in more detail here. There is a DISC questionnaire that can be used to determine preferred behavioural styles, however by interacting with others in a meeting, their preferred style soon becomes evident.

Table 2 gives an overview of each of the DISC behavioural styles.

Participants adopting a direct style prefer open and straightforward meetings to satisfy their need for quick results. Participants more comfortable with an influencing style, on the other hand, prefer a friendly, emotionally honest environment that recognises their achievements. Steady style participants seek group harmony and prefer meetings to be run at a more relaxed pace and in an agreeable and cooperative manner. Conscientious style participants are most comfortable with detailed, accurate information and need the time to consider all the information. Recognising the preferred behavioural style of participants can help a chairman overcome potential blocks in discussion. Work through the following examples:

Table 2 DISC behavioural styles

Direct	Influencing
Characteristics: Focuses on tasks Operates at a quick pace Asks "what?" Motivated to solve problems Prefers direct answers Questions status quo Independent Do more of: Listen Consider others	Characteristics: Focuses on people Operates at a quick pace Asks "who?" Motivated to influence others Prefers working with people Expresses thoughts and feelings Enthusiastic Do more of: Attend to detail Follow through
Conscientious	Steady
Characteristics: Focuses on tasks Operates at a considered pace Asks "why?" Motivated to achieve thoroughness Prefers focusing on details Desires clearly defined goals Analytical Do more of: Be open Deal with varying opinions	Characteristics: Focuses on people Operates at a considered pace Asks "how?" Motivated to maintain harmony Prefers participating in a group Listens more than talks Patient Do more of: Cope with change Make decisions

Direct

A person displaying direct (task focus, fast pace) behaviour in a meeting may: be agitated if the meeting has not started on time and they have had to wait for others to arrive; want to "get straight to the point" and want the group to make immediate and binding decisions on what needs to be done next.

How should you as a chairman manage the participant with a direct style?

When direct style participants become agitated in a meeting, they should be reassured that the meeting is sticking to the topic and time wasting is being kept to a minimum. They should be given straight forward answers that are clear, brief, and to the point. The chairman should try to make everything task based, even if the issue concerns people. For example: turn the desire for involved group discussion into the task of making sure everyone's opinion is heard.

Influencing

A group member displaying influencing (people focus, fast pace) behaviour in a meeting may: have already socialised with everyone in the room and is continuing to do so even after the meeting has started; want to talk about tangential issues rather than directly addressing the agenda item; and may have difficulty focusing on one particular item at a time.

How should you as a chairman manage the participant with an influencing style?

When influencing style participants become distracted in a meeting, they should be allowed to verbalise their thoughts briefly and then be guided back to the topic. The facilitator should attempt to be as informal and sociable as possible but still provide them with written details and try to keep them focused.

Steady

A participant displaying steady (people focus, considered pace) behaviour in a meeting may: not mind waiting for

the late comers to arrive; avoid confrontation or discussions involving conflict; want to know how the decisions made may affect others or how many other groups have been consulted and what was the outcome of those consultations?

How should you as a chairman manage the participant with a steady style?

If the chairman's approach is too direct and hurried, this may be perceived by the steady style participant as bossy and unfeeling. This participant needs time to adjust to what is being discussed. Often they will remain quiet during a meeting but contribute to discussions held during meeting breaks such as morning or afternoon teas or they may stay around after a meeting to talk with the chairman.

Conscientious

A participant displaying conscientious (task focus, considered pace) behaviour in a meeting may: have read all the agenda items and appendices; have a comprehensive list of issues they want to discuss in detail; bring information from other sources such as the internet; not be willing to make a decision without sufficient information.

How should you as a chairman manage the participant with a conscientious style?

If the meeting does not answer this participant's issues in sufficient detail, they may find the interaction scatty and uncomprehensive. What they require is as much detail as possible, preferably before the meeting. They are the type of participant who needs to receive a detailed agenda and background papers well before the meeting. Similarly, at the end of a meeting, they will need to know the follow up procedures and time frames involved. A clear structure to the meeting and methodical approach gives the conscientious participant comfort.

As a chairman, you will need to address the various behavioural styles within a meeting to achieve the best process and outcome for all participants. Although you will

Box 1 Modifying our behaviour (reference: Carlson Learning Company²⁵)

When relating to the direct behavioural style

The direct style like others to be direct, straightforward, and open to their need for results

Try to:

- Make communication brief and to the point
- Respect their need for autonomy
- Be clear about rules and expectations
- Let them initiate
- Show your competence
- Stick to the topic
- Show independence
- Eliminate time wasters

Be prepared for:

- A blunt and demanding approach
- Lack of empathy
- Lack of sensitivity
- Little social interaction

When relating to the influencing behavioural style

The influencing style like others to be friendly, emotionally honest, and to recognise their contributions

Try to:

- Approach them informally
- Be relaxed and sociable
- Let them verbalise thoughts and feelings
- Keep the conversation light
- Provide written details
- Give public recognition for individual accomplishments
- Use humour

Be prepared for:

- Attempts to persuade or influence others
- Need for the "lime light"
- Over-estimating self and others
- Over-selling ideas
- Vulnerability to perceived rejection

When relating to the steady behavioural style

The steady style like others to be relaxed, agreeable, cooperative, and show appreciation

Try to:

- Be logical and systematic in your approach
- Provide a consistent and secure environment
- Let them know how things will be done
- Use sincere appreciation
- Show their importance to organisational good
- Let them move slowly into change

Be prepared for:

- A friendly approach to colleagues and supervisors
- Resistance to change
- Difficulty prioritising
- Difficulty with deadlines

When relating to the conscientious behavioural style

The conscientious style like others to minimise socialising, give details, and value accuracy

Try to:

- Give clear expectations and deadlines
- Show dependability
- Show loyalty
- Be tactful and emotionally reserved
- Allow precedent to be a guide
- Be precise and focused
- Value high standards

Be prepared for:

- Discomfort with ambiguity
- Resistance to vague or general information
- Desire to double check
- Little need to affiliate with people

have your own preferred behavioural style, you will also need to move freely between each of the other styles as the meeting requirements vary. The different behavioural styles required by a chairman according to the demands of a meeting are illustrated in boxes 2 and 3.

AFTER THE MEETING IS OVER

It is the responsibility of the chairman of a meeting to ensure that appropriate follow up occurs. Proceedings of the meeting or minutes are the most common way to circulate a summary of what has transpired. A meeting's note taker may be appointed to the group to undertake this task but it is always up to the chairman to ensure that the minutes are accurate to the best of their knowledge and recall before they are circulated to the other participants as soon as possible. When a note taker is unclear about an issue or decision, they should seek clarification within the meeting if possible or with the chairman before the minutes are distributed.

Minutes are the written record of what transpires during a meeting and may be used later as a legal document during a dispute or for clarification. They should be written in an accurate and concise style. Note takers need to balance the need for brevity against the desire for completeness during a meeting. Typically they include: a list of people who attended the meeting, a record of apologies for absentees, and a description in prose or point form of the major issues raised, and the discussion that ensued. In an objective, unbiased, and non-judgemental way the minutes should also summarise areas of agreement and disagreement and consensus decisions on a way forward, including who is responsible for what action and in what timeframe. This prevents members from later claiming that they were unaware of their responsibilities, and it also prevents more than one person undertaking the same role.²⁶

Even when a meeting seems successful, participants can still experience a sense of dissatisfaction after the meeting. Often, post-meeting inactivity leads to the same ground being covered in the following meetings. Three areas can make the period between meetings more productive, and prepare the ground for subsequent meetings:

- circulating a record of the meeting is important because it identifies actions to be taken, who has the responsibility for those actions and in what time frame.

Box 2 Tasks of an effective chairman²⁰

- Task: Make the agenda and objectives for the meeting clear. (Direct behaviour)

Example: What we will cover today is.....

- Task: Ensure that your meeting starts and finishes on time. (Direct behaviour)

Example: As we have a lot to cover today, I think it's time we moved on to the next agenda item. Can we wrap up this issue now?

- Task: Make latecomers welcome, and bring them up to date. (Influencing behaviour)

Example: Thanks for joining us. So far we have covered.....

- Task: Gain group involvement—draw out the quiet members and tone down the loud members. (Steady behaviour)

Example: Does anyone have any suggestions? We have been hearing a lot from this side of the room—what comments or suggestions does the other side of the room have?

- Task: Bring distracted participants back into the group discussion. (Influencing behaviour)

Example: It looks like you two have come up with something interesting. Can you share your thoughts with us?

- Task: Remain unbiased and not drive a personal agenda. (Steady behaviour)

Example: I hadn't thought about it like that before. What does the rest of the group think?

- Task: Accept questions and encourage discussion (Steady behaviour).

Example: That's a very thoughtful question, does anyone have any ideas?

- Task: Clarify group decisions or individual input. (Conscientious behaviour)

Example: So, as you've just stated, the...

- Task: Take a note of participants' non-verbal input. (Influencing behaviour)

Example: People are getting restless; it looks like we could all do with a 5 minute break.

- Task: Mediate conflicting opinions. (Steady behaviour)

Example: There are a lot of different views being expressed. Let's review what we've agreed on so far...

- Task: Without actually providing all the answers, know what resources are available to find the answers. (Conscientious behaviour)

Example: I can look that up and get back to you.

- Task: Incorporate varied opinions into the group's discussion. (Steady behaviour)

Example: How would you relate that into the current discussion of the group?

- Task: Defer new issues to another time. (Direct behaviour)

Example: You may have a point, but it's not for this meeting. We'll discuss it another time.

Box 3 Tips for problem solving in the meeting using DISC

- Issue: The meeting seems to have developed a life of its own and may not achieve what you wanted or expected. What can you do?

Strategy: Ground the meeting in the background detail you have prepared. For example: "Let's revisit what we decided at the beginning of the meeting were the key issues we wanted to cover." (Direct behavioural approach)

- Issue: Warring participants seem to be continuing their ongoing battle in the meeting.

Strategy: Look at problems using your intuition and emotion to help you work out why the combatants are acting in that way. Also try to think how other people in the meeting are reacting. Revisit the behavioural styles of your participants and try to match your style to the one that will be most effective in resolving this block. (Surfing all four styles)

- Issue: You are unsure about whether a consensus decision reached in the meeting is appropriate.

Strategy: Make a mental list of all the less than optimal features of the decision. Examine the points defensively and cautiously. Try to see why it might not work. Consider what outcome you think is best and achievable: eliminate the decision, alter it, or prepare contingency plans to counter it at a later date. (Conscientious behavioural approach)

- Issue: The mood of the meeting has become quite sombre and nihilistic.

Strategy: Recall your meeting preparation to find the positive outcomes that you envisaged could come from the meeting and the value of them. Conscript the more supportive members of the group into action to find a way to keep the meeting going when everything looks gloomy and difficult. Use your own enthusiasm to persuade others. (Influencing behavioural approach)

Box 4 Some useful web sites

Hospital Toolkit for running effective meetings:
<http://www.umdj.edu/uhnetweb/fivestarttoolbox/toolkits/runningeffectivemeetings.asp>
 Running meetings for people with disabilities: <http://www.lbwf.gov.uk/access-sec1.pdf>
 Company meetings: <http://www.companyregistrations.co.uk/directors-meetings.aspTeam>

- the chairperson has other responsibilities in taking an interest in what happens between meetings by asking for progress reports and ensuring that matters are progressing. This can also have an influence on the development of the next agenda.
- reporting post-meeting progress to all concerned can encourage others to believe in the importance of the tasks involved and enhance the status of the meetings.²⁷

CONCLUSION

The key to running an effective meeting in a health care setting is keeping control from the first moment the idea the meeting is mooted right up until the minutes of the meeting are ratified. This is achieved by extensive pre-meeting planning, effective use of the meeting environment, and optimal management of the meeting participants. The objectives of the meeting must be in everyone's thoughts during the meeting to achieve optimal outcomes.

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