

NIECR is a valuable resource.

2. Record Risk Factors – “WEAD+”

WEAD+ stands for Warfarin / Epilepsy / Asthma / Diabetes plus Pregnancy and Peptic ulcer disease. You rarely have time to take a lengthy previous medical history but you must record the ‘WEAD’ history on every patient, especially in minors, because these are high risk factors in practice especially when prescribing. E.g. warfarin is a risk factor for bleeding after head injury; diabetes: soft tissue infection, silent infarct; epilepsy: drug interactions; asthma: NSAIDs. This will have been filled out on the front of the ED Notes.

3. Focused History

Your time is short. You are highly dependent on an accurate history if you are to make the correct diagnosis. Don't forget to listen to what your patient is saying – failing to do so is a very common source of error and complaints in the Emergency Department. When dealing with trauma, the mechanism of injury is crucial. Don't jump to conclusions – if you miss something important in the history, you will fail to carry out the correct examination and. Take careful note of the vital signs and any other comments recorded by nursing staff in their Triage note – a discrepancy between your opinion and the nurse's opinion should ring alarm bells.

The CLINICAL section gives guidance for history-taking in specific conditions, but don't forget what Dr Richard Asher, the prominent English Physician once said,

“Listen to your patient, she is telling you what is wrong with her..”

4. Directed Physical Examination

- *“if you haven't carried out and documented the necessary examination you will have no defence against medical negligence claims”*

A concise and accurate directed physical examination separates the experienced from the inexperienced ED Doctor. When your history is complete you must carry out a careful but directed physical examination, concentrating on the *relevant* physical signs. You must ensure that your patient is adequately undressed for this examination – patients write official complaints if a doctor examines them through their clothes (yes...some