



INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CRITICAL DECISION METHODOLOGY FOR CLINICIANS

The Critical Decision Method (CDM) is a structured interview process that can be used to elicit information and knowledge from experts (in this case, clinicians) about how they formulate their decision-making strategies. The following protocol is based on research successfully carried out as part of the WayWard project

Set Up

Determine the length of time of each interview – this will depend on the context, but it is recommended that this is no more than 30 minutes of a clinician’s time, if possible. Each interview to be in a face-to-face session between researcher and clinician, using a suitable space on a ward or a bookable room in the hospital. Interviews to be scheduled at times convenient to clinicians and non-disruptive to their work, such as hospital lunchtime and before or after shifts. A suitable audio recording device should be set up. A whiteboard or large piece of paper for recording feedback and enabling discussion should be available.

Information and consent procedure (5 minutes)

Participants to be given information about the study (including objectives, method, data collection and storage, analysis, publication, withdrawal and contact details) on a printed sheet to retain for their records, and an opportunity to ask questions. If, after reading the sheet and having any questions addressed, the participant is happy to proceed, they should be asked to complete and sign a consent form, countersigned and retained by the researcher. The researcher indicates that audio recording will then begin.

Incident, account and timeline (approx. 10 minutes)

Sample question, focusing on task management:

“Can you think of an occasion during a shift when task management was particularly challenging? It might be a time when your skills were particularly tested, or when your level of experience made a difference in the way you dealt with the situation. Give an indication of the sequence of events, their duration and the lengths of time between them please.”

“I’ll try not to interrupt you, unless I need to clarify something, and will concentrate on noting down the events you’re describing as a timeline on this whiteboard.”

After incident has been recounted:

“What do you think of the timeline I’ve constructed while you were talking? Is the information correct? Are things in the right order? Have I missed anything?”

[Researcher can talk through the timeline so participant can correct]

Probing critical decisions (approx. 10 minutes)

“What were the turning points in the situation, or when your actions affected the events?”

[Researcher can make suggestions to prompt participant]

[Researcher to select 1-3 critical decisions for probing depending on time available and/or nature of incident described]

“Can we think about this critical moment in more detail?”

Possible probe questions:

Decision-making:

“What were the possible courses of action you considered? Why did you choose this option?”

“What were your specific goals in doing this?”

“How much time pressure were you under?”

Knowledge and experience:

“Did you seek help at this point? How did you know where to turn for guidance?”

“Is this a type of event you’re trained to deal with? What training or experience did you draw on?”

Assessment and sense-making:

“Was this like anything you’d previously experienced? What about that was relevant to this case?”

“How would you have summarised the situation to another clinician at this point?”

“What consequences of this action did you imagine? How did you think events would unfold?”

“How did you feel at this point?”

Observation:

[May already have been covered in responses to previous probe questions]

“What did you notice about the situation? What alerted you to this?”

“What information did you use to make the decision? How did you get this information?”

“How did you act on the available information?”

Hypotheticals (approx. 5 minutes)

“Finally, can you speculate about ways you might have responded differently in this situation, and how this would have altered the outcome?”

“Would someone with more or less experience than you have acted differently? Would they have noticed the same things? How would they know what to do?”

“What additional training, information or experience might have helped you or improved the outcome?”

Wrap up

Ask the participant if they have any remaining questions and/or would like to receive information about research progress and findings in the future. Thank them for their time.