

Facilitating A Welcoming Learning Experience: Supporting Preceptors & Student

Case Discussion Questions & Panelists Responses

Case: Learner with GAD/ADHD (non-visible disability)

Taylor is a motivated student on rotation at your hospital. On the first day, they privately disclose they have a non-visible disability: generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) – which can affect their processing speed and ability to multitask in high pressure situations. Taylor shares they might need more time when working through complex patient cases.

Taylor is enthusiastic about patient care and expresses a desire to develop confidence in counseling patients. During the first week, you notice Taylor is hesitant to speak up in interdisciplinary rounds and appears flustered when asked to provide recommendations on the spot.

Question 1

- **How can we foster a well-structured learning environment where Taylor can be successful and achieve their goals while ensuring quality patient care?**

Panelist Responses

Alena Abraham, PharmD

*Postdoctoral Fellow, Global Regulatory Affairs & Regulatory Affairs International,
Merck/Rutgers Pharmaceutical Industry Fellowship Program*

- Supporting a student like Taylor starts with **building a learning environment that feels structured, supportive, and adaptable**. For students who experience anxiety or ADHD, clarity and predictability can make a big difference in how they perform and how confident they feel.
- **Setting clear expectations** from the start is one of the most helpful things a preceptor can do. Letting Taylor know in advance which patient they'll present or what the day will look like helps reduce uncertainty and gives them time to prepare. That small adjustment can boost their confidence and allow them to show up ready to engage
- It's also helpful to **break complex tasks into smaller, step-by-step chunks**. Instead of asking Taylor to manage a full case on their own right away, walk through each phase together. For example, start with reviewing the chart, identifying key problems, then preparing a

recommendation. This approach helps prevent feeling overwhelmed and supports skill-building in a manageable way.

- **Provide accommodations like giving a little extra time for complex tasks or providing a quiet workspace** can go a long way. These supports do not lower standards. They create the conditions for the student to succeed while still ensuring safe and high-quality patient care
- **Create a safe environment** is essential. When students feel like they can ask questions, admit when they are unsure, or take a moment to gather their thoughts, they're more likely to grow. Encouraging reflection and offering regular check-ins shows the student that their learning matters just as much as the clinical outcomes.

Eliza Muhler, PharmD

Clinical pharmacist at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital

- For Taylor, it's important to implement clear expectations, flexibility, and intentional support strategies. Given Taylor's disclosure of GAD and ADHD, we can proactively accommodate their learning needs by:
 - **Providing advance notice** for patient discussions/presentations when feasible, allowing Taylor to process complex information at their own pace and build confidence before speaking up in group settings
 - **Using structured frameworks** (e.g., SOAP notes or SBARs) during patient case reviews to help Taylor organize their thoughts and present recommendations more clearly
 - **Gradually increasing Taylor's participation in interdisciplinary rounds**, perhaps by assigning a specific patient to follow consistently during the initial weeks spent on rotation, so they can feel more confident with repetition and familiarity.
 - **Offering protected time for one-on-one teaching/debriefing**, where Taylor can ask clarifying questions and reflect on clinical decisions without the pressure of a group setting on rounds

Question 2

- **What would be helpful for the preceptor to say or do to help create a safe space for Taylor to grow and develop during the rotation?**

Panelist Responses

Nana Esi Bray, PharmD Candidate 2026

Third year pharmacy student at University of Maryland School of Pharmacy

- **Intentionally set the tone early**
 - Clearly communicate that the rotation is a space where students are encouraged to ask questions, take time to process information, and learn through reflection.
 - Simple, affirming statements like “It’s okay to pause and think through your answer,” or “You’re not expected to know everything on day one,” can go a long way in reducing pressure and building trust
- **Normalize different learning and communication styles** without singling anyone out.
 - Encouraging students to engage in ways that work best for them, whether that is thinking out loud, writing things down, or asking clarifying questions, signals flexibility and support.
- **Provide structure and predictability**
 - Give a daily outline or preview of expectations can reduce uncertainty and improve focus. During interdisciplinary rounds or high-pressure situations, allowing a moment to gather thoughts or encouraging a follow-up response like, “Let me double-check and get back to you,” helps preserve confidence while still fostering accountability.
- **Model vulnerability and empathy.**
 - When a preceptor shares their own challenges as a student, like being nervous to speak up or struggling with confidence helps deconstruct the idea that learners need to be perfect. It humanizes the preceptor and creates a more approachable and supportive learning environment
- **Complete Regular check-ins that go beyond clinical performance**
 - Asking, “How are you adjusting to the pace?” or “Is there anything I can do to support your learning?”, shows that the preceptor sees the learner as a whole person, not just a student meeting required competencies. These small but intentional conversations can make a big difference in a student’s sense of safety and belonging.

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- Begin the rotation by **explicitly affirming that learners are encouraged to ask questions, make mistakes, and seek feedback as part of the learning process**
- **Reinforce positive behaviors** when Taylor contributes—even if imperfectly—so they associate speaking up with support rather than scrutiny