

Example of GPs script:

Patient contribution

Is it your hand you're here about today, then?

So, the main thing you want me to help you with today really relates to your right ear. It's been going on for a month, although you have had a problem with tinnitus historically since 1991.

So that's your priority, but you also mentioned that there's a hand issue?

Okay, so if we prioritise your ear in the first instance is that okay?

ICE

What did you think was going on with your ear?

What was your deepest fear related to that?

Okay, and any drastic things that you'd read on the internet for the ear?

Nothing like that, no? Alright. Was there anything in particular that you wanted me to do about the thing with the ear?

PSO

Okay, and you're not a smoker?

Red flags

Okay, how are you in yourself?

No clots in the family? Nothing like that?

Focussed history

Okay, any discharge coming out of the ear?

Any change in your hearing?

Other than that, have you noticed any congestion?

No cold symptoms at the moment, no cough or anything?

Any spinning sensations at all?

Okay. And the hand problem, if I can just double check?

No injury, and no family history of arthritis?

Good, can I check there's no swellings anywhere else?

No joint swellings, no joint tenderness, no stiffness in the mornings or anything like that?

And your weight's been fairly stable at the moment, is it?

Okay, and the world's not going 'round when you turn over in bed?

Alright, you've had no chest pains and no breathlessness?

And your teeth are okay, are they?

Focussed examination

Good, okay, well why don't we check you over? We'll start with your ear and then have a wee look at your hand as well, if that's okay?

I'm going to test your hearing if I may?

Just tell me what I'm saying... [whispered] 'twenty-one'.

Good... [whispered] 'ninety-eight'.

So, you're hearing's pretty good.

Not sore when I press on there?

Yeah, okay. Open your mouth... breathe in; close your mouth. And no pain in your face at all?

And as you said, no cold symptoms, not sneezing. If you can look towards your husband? And you've never been a smoker, have you? Good, okay. Let's have a wee look at your hand as well.

So, no swelling of your joints there.

Oh, alright. And you're not tender there?

Can you cock your wrist up there?

It doesn't hurt when you do that?

Identify problem

(Regarding the hand - Great, okay, so it seems to be getting better, whatever it's been.)

All right, okay. So, the problem- the main issue that you wanted to talk about was related to your ear. You were wondering about wax; there's no suggestion of any wax there. Your hearing's pretty good, but your ear drum on the right-hand side is slightly sucked in, in a way – that sort of thing sometimes happens with a cold, but you've not mentioned a cold. But, it's usually caused by you not being able to balance the pressures in your ear, so it's a problem called 'eustachian tube dysfunction'. You know when you go up in a plane and you pop your ears?

That's not working so well at the moment. Can you make it pop at the moment, if you hold your nose and blow until your ear pops, does that work on that side?

It does on that side, but not on that side? So, that confirms that's what the problem is.

Check understanding

Sure, okay. But it seems to be getting better of its own accord.

Does that sound okay?

Do you want to go over any of that again?

Develops management plan / shares management plan

Right, it's nothing sinister or worrying. It'll get better, but we can make it get better a bit faster if you want.

So, all you need to do is to learn how to do that popping exercise.

you can do that with a mint. So, having a mint in your mouth, maybe sugar-free chewing gum for you would be ideal, being diabetic – but all you want to do is to make your ear pop several times a day. If it's not working without help, then it may be helpful for you to use a decongestant, but you mustn't use the decongestant for any longer than about a week or so.

And you can just buy that over the counter, just a nasal decongestant – the chemist will recommend something for you. Does that sound okay?

Would it be helpful for me to write down the name of that problem for you?

Alright, now you can look this up if you like.

On patient.info, but you're looking up 'eustachian tube dysfunction'.

Yeah, would you like me to show you a picture of this?

Safety net and follow up

I need to know if you're finding that the forearm is becoming swollen and tender.

But, if you've got persistent problems with stiffness and pain in your joints, let's have another look at you as well.

That should settle things. If you're getting new problems, so if you've got persistent deafness, if you've got discharge from your ear, and it's sore in your ear – let's see you urgently. Don't think that's going to happen.

Or if you've got vertigo, where the world goes 'round persistently for more than a minute at a time, then we really ought to see you as well. But there's no suggestion of anything worrying, and I can't see any particular problem with the hand, but if you've got a persistent problem with that, then I'm happy to see you again. Do you want to go over any of that again?