

MNHS: Critical incident report - annotated example

Critical incident report

Context of the incident

This report will outline a critical incident which occurred in Week 9, Semester 2 in my clinical tutorial. The incident was initiated by my tutor who announced that she would provide individual feedback to students on their performance in clinical tutorial discussions. She also stated that she would be producing written comments on each student's behaviour, attitude and contribution in tutorials to be incorporated into student portfolios for Semester 2.

Details of the incident

At the end of my clinical tutorial my tutor arranged for us to meet briefly in order for her to discuss her feedback with me. She stated that over the semester she had noticed that I very rarely spoke in the tutorials and did not appear to engage with the other students. She was concerned that I appeared to lack confidence, and explained that being able to express opinions clearly and confidently was essential in my future career as a doctor. In her view the only way to develop confidence was to participate regularly. She asked me how I felt about this, and if there was a reason why I almost never spoke in class. I explained that in my culture students were not always encouraged to speak, and for that reason I did not find it easy to participate in discussions. I also mentioned that I sometimes feel shy.

Thoughts, feelings and concerns

At the time of this incident, many emotions were running through me. I felt embarrassed that my lack of confidence was so obvious to her, and also concerned about what impact it might have on my results. I was worried that she

The writing style required in producing a critical incident report is different from that of an academic essay; however, it is still important to present ideas in a systematic and organised way, and to use appropriate language. This example uses sub-headings consistent with the assignment requirements to explicitly organise the report. It is simply written, and avoids use of technical or colloquial language.



Note the use of reported speech to describe the conversations between those involved in the incident.

- She stated that...
- She was concerned that...
- In her view...



Note the use of first person to describe the writer's reactions and feelings:

- I explained...
- I mentioned...
- I felt embarrassed...
- I was worried that...
- I realised that...



Your honesty and objectivity will help you make sense of the incident and identify meaningful learning opportunities.



Legend

 Good practice

 Needs improvement

 Comment

would write negative comments about my behaviour and attitude, and that these comments would be available for other lecturers to read. At the same time, I realised that her concerns were justified. I had been aware of my lack of contribution throughout the semester, and had even avoided going to some tutorials because of those feelings.

This was also an unfamiliar situation for me, as I had always done very well at school and achieved good marks, so I had never had to talk with a teacher in this way before. Although I understood that her intention was to help me to do better, I felt very uncomfortable and even ashamed to have to acknowledge my poor performance in this area. I felt guilty when I realised that in her opinion I had contributed so little to the class.

Demands

This incident was very demanding because it forced me to acknowledge an area where I have always lacked confidence. Even though I preferred to focus on other areas, I knew that my tutor would be noticing my behaviour in tutorials over the rest of the semester, and that her written comments would depend on my performance, so as a consequence I felt under pressure. I also felt anxious about confronting this issue and trying to develop the confidence I needed.

Impact on studies

Although this incident caused me discomfort and added pressure in the short term, I realise that it was a very significant event in my studies. As a result of the conversation with my tutor I was forced to reconsider my behaviour in tutorials and became more aware of how others viewed me. I used to think that I was 'invisible' in tutorials, but now I realised that not talking actually made me stand out more. Fortunately, the tutor gave me advice on how to gradually develop the confidence I needed, and I also sought help from some of my friends. I even organised some informal tutorials with friends to give me a chance to practice. Over the final weeks of the semester I managed to talk at least once in every clinical tutorial, either asking a question or making a comment. I have

started trying to talk in other tutorials also, in other subjects. I have set myself the goal of talking at least once every tutorial.

Good practice: You have analysed the situation and shown a deeper understanding of the critical incident and its implications despite how it made you feel uncomfortable

This incident was therefore very important, because without it I would still be remaining silent in my tutorials, and would have received negative written comments from my clinical tutor in my portfolio. More importantly, it has helped me to acknowledge and work on an area for improvement which will be beneficial in all aspects of the course. Developing greater confidence at speaking in tutorials may lead to me being more confident in performing clinical examinations on patients. It may also lead to me feeling more in control and experiencing less nerves during my Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) assessments.

Good: You recognise the importance of improving this aspect of your practice and the impact on your learning if it were not addressed

Impact on career

My tutor was right in stating that a doctor must be able to express opinions clearly and confidently. Good communication skills are essential for doctors, and are important in nearly all aspects of medicine. I feel that I will be more confident in dealing with patients and more effective in taking a patient history, for example. Developing greater confidence in how I communicate can lead to patients having greater trust in me as their doctor. Improving my skills in this area will also make me more effective in discussing cases with colleagues, and in participating in teams when necessary.

Expression: it is better to say 'less nervous' instead of 'experiencing less nerves' which is quite informal. Remember, although reflective writing is about your feelings and experiences, it is still an academic genre and needs to follow conventions of academic writing in terms of formality

This incident made me realise that I can talk confidently once I overcome my initial fears. It demonstrated to me that in order to make progress or create positive change you must first acknowledge that a problem exists. This is a lesson which may be useful in better understanding patient behaviour and attitudes. Often the first step to improving a situation, or dealing with a problem, is accepting that some change is necessary; and I may be more able to impart this information to patients having experienced this incident. Overall, this incident has had a positive impact on both my studies and the development of skills needed in my future career.

This would have been a good opportunity to incorporate some of the literature on the importance of communication skills for healthcare professionals. Remember that it is an expectation to use evidence to support the discussion

Good practice: You recognise and outline the implications of good communication skills on your future professional practice