



Royal College
of Physicians

Role as volunteer patient

Frequently asked questions

What is a volunteer patient?

Volunteers agree to be examined and/or interviewed for educational purposes by a healthcare professional. This might include:

- > students who are training to be doctors or physician associates
- > postgraduate doctors, nurses or allied healthcare professionals who are already qualified carrying out training or developing skills.

Who can be a volunteer patient?

People of all ages, genders, physical condition and backgrounds can participate. No previous experience is necessary. Some clinical skills exams require people in general good health, while other sessions require specific symptoms or conditions.

Here is a list of some of the common conditions we are looking for:

- > **Neurological problems:** eg Parkinson's disease, previous stroke, previous spine or brain surgery, peripheral neuropathies.
- > **Heart problems:** eg heart murmur, heart failure, valve disease or replacement.
- > **Chest/breathing problems:** eg previous TB, COPD, pulmonary fibrosis, restrictive lung disease or bronchiectasis, or surgery to remove part or all of the lung.
- > **Abdominal problems:** eg a stoma, kidney or liver transplant, polycystic kidney or liver disease
- > **Joint problems:** eg rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis of the hands and wrists.
- > **Dermatological problems:** eg psoriasis, eczema.





What happens during an interview or examination for educational purposes?

We may ask you to change into a hospital gown to allow candidates to examine different areas of the body (such as knees, feet, shoulders, upper abdomen, chest). Sensitive areas are excluded from examinations. Some sessions involve interviews and medical history taking only, for which you will remain fully clothed.

Depending on the type of session, candidates may ask questions regarding health history, daily routine, psychosocial aspects of your life or family background. There is no obligation to share. The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) is bound by the health professional's Code of Ethics, therefore any information shared is kept within the strictest of confidence.

There will always be at least one examiner, an experienced doctor or healthcare practitioner, present during the whole session.

What to bring and what to wear?

It is a good idea to wear loose comfortable clothing, and separate tops and bottoms rather than dresses. Where necessary, gowns will be provided.

It is useful to bring reading material with you as there may be gaps in between candidates.

What is the time commitment?

Typically, clinical skills sessions can be between 4–8 hours. It is entirely voluntary and there is no minimum number of sessions you must do in a year. Clinical exams run all year, and we will email approximately 1 month before each exam to see if you are free. We cater scheduling to your availability and the best suited exam.

We sometimes ask volunteers to wait on standby/as reserve, either at home or at the centre, in case a volunteer cannot make it on the day. You will still receive thank you vouchers in this instance.

We may also ask volunteers to come in before exam days for an orientation visit and/or for our medical team to review certain signs and symptoms to see if they are suitable for some exams.

How will I know when you need volunteer patients?

As a volunteer patient, you will receive regular emails from the RCP to inform you of forthcoming opportunities. If you don't have an email address, please let us know and we can keep you informed by post or telephone.

Where will the interviews or examinations be held?

They will usually be held at the Royal College of Physicians at The Spine, Paddington Village, Liverpool L7 3FA.

We may share opportunities to participate as a volunteer patient for other institutes or hospitals.

What will I get out of the day?

Feedback from volunteers shows that they enjoy helping healthcare professionals to develop their skills. Volunteers receive between £40–80 Love2shop vouchers depending on how long you are with us for.

They can be redeemed in over 1,000 stores, restaurants and attractions, such as Argos, Boots, Halfords, Iceland, Pizza Express, River Island, Marks and Spencer and TK Maxx.

How will I get to the exam?

If you find your own way to the RCP at The Spine, we will give you an extra £20 voucher to cover costs. There is a private car park a 2-minute walk away from the building and you will need to pay the cost.

If you do not drive, or prefer not to, a taxi will be provided to collect you from your home and take you back again. There is nothing to pay for the taxi but there may be a wait.

We expect those volunteering as healthy volunteers, without a specific medical condition, to find their own way to the RCP.

Do I need to bring food?

Lunch and refreshments will be provided throughout the day for you. Please let us know if you have any dietary requirements.

Will I receive medical advice?

Participation as a volunteer patient does not substitute for medical care, advice or treatment. You will not receive prescriptions nor participate in invasive or diagnostic procedures.

What information will the RCP keep?

We will ask for your consent to keep the following details on a computerised database:

- > Name, address, email address and telephone number
- > Next of kin and phone number
- > Date of birth
- > Diagnosis and symptoms (if relevant).

You can withdraw your consent at any time by email, post or telephone.

Do I need to live in Liverpool?

We prefer our healthy volunteers to live in Liverpool/Wirral. For those with certain conditions, they can live anywhere in the north-west as long as you are within approximately 1 hour travelling distance of the RCP at The Spine, Liverpool.



How can I apply?

You can apply online on the [RCP website](https://www.rcp.ac.uk) or contact the patient bank and surrogate coordinator at VolunteerPatient@rcp.ac.uk or by telephone via 0151 318 2020 or 07458 084538.



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