# Conducting a patient experience focus group

*A patient experience focus group can help your practice really engage in conversation with patients to hear what they have to say in their own words. After a focus group, you should come away with actionable ideas that can improve your practice. Feedback given in this forum can also be powerful when shared with staff, physicians and leadership. Below are tips for conducting a focus group, a sample protocol and examples of questions that can be used to spark dialog.*

**Tips**

1. Focus groups should be small, approximately 8-12 people.
2. Select participants using an unbiased approach.
3. Incentivize participants if possible.
4. Provide some refreshments.
5. Circular seating is common and preferred in this setting.
6. Consider using participant name tags.
7. Focus groups are one-time sessions that should last approximately 90 minutes.
8. A trained moderator should be present to conduct the focus group.
9. Record the session.

**Sample protocol for a patient experience focus group**

The moderator should deliver an opening statement explaining the purpose of the focus group, how it will be conducted, the rules (i.e., no phones, respectful conversation) and what the results will be used for.

***Example introduction***

Moderator: “Welcome! Thank you all for participating in today’s focus group. We are here today to discuss the patient experience in this practice and receive critical feedback that will help us shape a new, comprehensive patient experience program. I will be your moderator today and guide conversation for the next 90 minutes. Before we get started, I would like to set some ground rules. I ask that you kindly turn off any electronic devices, be respectful to each other throughout the discussion, and remember, there are no right or wrong answers — everyone’s opinion is valued! Let’s get started by doing some brief introductions (participants can introduce themselves).”

***Example icebreaker***

Ask participants to share an experience they may have had in the practice (positive or negative). Other participants can be encouraged to share their experiences or build the discussion off the initial story.

***Example questions***

* What could we do to improve your experience in the practice?
* What do you think patients value most when they go to the doctor?
* How do you feel the practice staff and physicians communicate with each other? With patients?
* How do you feel you were treated during your last experience with the practice?
* Has anyone had an experience with practice leadership? What was that like?

Source: *AMA. Practice transformation series: building a patient experience program. 2017.*