

Scottish Clinical Interactions Project (SCIP)

What actually happens in GP consultations and can we improve communication to provide better care?

This is the ultimate aim of the Scottish Clinical Interactions Project (SCIP), a feasibility study funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) and led by academics in both Dundee and St Andrews. We already know that the GP consultation is the hub of most clinical decisions and that this is where most illnesses are detected, diagnosed, treated or referred. However, we also know that people communicate their symptoms in different ways, using varying language to emphasise some or perhaps understate others, making illness detection potentially difficult. We also know that GPs use different strategies and techniques to explore symptoms, explain treatments and help people change behaviours where appropriate. Until now, however, researchers have rarely been able to identify different patient and GP behaviours in consultations and follow them through time to see how and whether they result in good or bad outcomes. With developments in information technology, and supported by a range of methodological skills and academic disciplines from the two universities, this may now be possible and the team is developing new software and hardware and piloting procedures to see if it is possible to routinely audio-record a large number of GP consultations and follow these patients through time. The result will be an unparalleled longitudinal research resource.