2.4: Current and Past Health

Understanding the client's **current and past health** is important and may provide an explanation or rationale for the client's current health status as illustrated in Figure 2.5. Furthermore, these data can provide insight into health promotion needs and co-morbidities. It is helpful to understand the current and past health profiles before assessing other aspects of health, as the information will inform subsequent questions.

**Figure 2.5**: The influence of past health on current health

The order of the questions about current and past health, and the detail elicited, often depends on the client’s main health needs and developmental status. Not all questions apply to every client; their use and phrasing is contingent on the individual client and their situation.

Your questions should also be based on the client’s response to the previous question.

As you develop your clinical judgment, which comes with practice, you will become more astute about **which questions**
are appropriate and how to frame the questions. Table 2.4 provides sample questions for assessing current and past health, but other questions may arise that you may need to ask depending the client’s main health needs and their responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Items</th>
<th>Questions and Statements</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current health</strong></td>
<td>• Table 2.4: Current and past health assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues other than their previously noted main health needs/reasons for seeking care.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parents or a care partner are often present during an assessment of an infant or child. The adult child or care partner are sometimes present during an assessment of an older adult, particularly if the client has an acute or chronic illness, or a cognitive impairment or developmental delay. Care partners are important advocates in care planning. Thus, a family-centred approach can help you assess the client, as well as the level of caregiver burden and the need for additional resources.

**Take Action**

In addition to a comprehensive assessment, you should engage in health promotion discussions about a client’s current and past health. For example, this may include helping the client to address any resolved issues associated with chronic and acute illnesses. Additionally, you should consider how the client can develop control over, and improve their physical, mental, and social well-being. You should assess and discuss with them their social and personal resources to
do so. Also, evaluate and intervene with critical findings related to current and past health that include anything that puts the client's life at risk.

Test Yourself

An interactive or media element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/healthassessment/?p=160