Table 2

Assessing awareness – key points for GPs

Assessing awareness is a clinical process	Technological tests: ● Are only needed to diagnose the cause ● Cannot establish presence of awareness ● Cannot establish absence of awareness
Formal assessment procedures should be used	The recommended ones in the UK are: ● Coma Recovery Scale – Revised (CRS-R) ● Wessex Head Injury Matrix (WHIM) ● Sensory Modality Assessment and Rehabilitation Technique (SMART)
Important information for relatives	Responsiveness is not the same as awareness: ● Patients may show non-specific (reflex) responses to stimuli ● Patients may show spontaneous movements, but not purposeful ones
Role of relatives	Relatives should be: ● Asked to report any observations, especially if the relative considers it evidence of awareness ● Offered the option of undertaking WHIM recording