

# ABCDs of Acute Behavioural Emergencies Online Course



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## Learning Outcomes:

**At the completion of the workshop the participants should be able to:**

1. Prioritise the immediate management of the patient presenting with disturbed behaviour
2. Differentiate the Red flags associated with a high risk for Violence and/or self-harm
3. Discriminate the crucial elements of the history and physical examination that can help differentiate medical from psychiatric causes of altered mental state.
4. Explain the clinical indications and legal requirements in relation to involuntary detention and/or restraint of a severely agitated patient
5. Outline the pharmacological approaches available for managing severe agitation
6. Contrast the recognised adverse effects of the commonly used sedative agents and their requirement for continuing observation and monitoring

**Summary of the e-Learning Program** The e-learning is interactive and requires the clinician to consider a range of the clinical problems and scenarios and provide a response. At the end of each topic a summative quiz is used to evaluate learning and understanding of the topic material. There are four topics, each expected to take the medical practitioner 120 minutes to complete with a total course time of 8.5 hours.

The four topics are

1. Immediate assessment priorities
2. Medical and Legal issues
3. Management of the Severely agitated patient
4. Pharmacology of the sedative agents used in clinical practice

# Outline of the Program

## Pre – course Quiz

### 1. Immediate Assessment Priorities – ABCD approach to Behavioral Disturbance

**Module Summary:** In the patient presenting with disturbed behaviour, disordered thinking or suspected acute mental illness the initial task is to stabilise the patient with the aim of minimising the risk of harm (to the patient and to others), identify and treat life threatening (medical) disease and reduce patient suffering and anxiety.

A useful way of thinking about how to approach the patient with behavioural disturbance is to consider it in terms of an extended "Primary Survey". This approach incorporates not just the typical ABCDE approach of Airway, Breathing, Circulation, Disability and Exposure but extends the model of care to include Risk Assessment, Behavioural stabilisation, Medical Clearance (or screening), a consideration of the need for Detention or restraint and providing an Explanation to the patient. This extended "ABCDE" approach to managing the patient with behavioural disturbance is considered in the cases discussed in this course.

#### Interaction/Assessment:

- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Approach to the Patient with Behavioural Disturbance (Formative assessment: 90 mins)
- Topic Quiz – Approach to the Patient with Behavioural Disturbance (Summative assessment: 30 mins)

### 2. Medical / Legal Issues: Medical causes for behavioural disturbance and legal procedures for involuntary detention

**Module Summary:** An important and often overlooked component in the assessment of the patient with behavioural disturbance is the identification and management of underlying medical illness. Evaluation requires an organised and systematic approach so that life threatening medical emergencies either coexisting with or causing behavioural disturbance are identified and managed.

The patient who requests to leave the emergency department (against medical advice) presents a dilemma to the clinician who is required to ensure that the patient has the (cognitive) capacity to make the choice to leave. In the following clinical case we explore the procedure for assessing capacity and the legislation framework that permits involuntary referral or detention of patients in a limited number of circumstances.

#### Interaction/Assessment:

- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Medical Clearance (Formative assessment: 45 mins)
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Involuntary Detention (formative assessment: 45 mins)
- Topic Quiz – Medical Clearance / Involuntary Detention (Summative assessment: 30 mins)

### 3. Managing Severe Agitation

**Module Summary:** The management of the agitated or violent patient embraces psychological, physical and pharmacological approaches. Psychological methods focus on controlling the environment through the establishment of communication and trust. Physical measures involve a show of force and physical restraint whilst pharmacological methods use strong sedatives to control behaviour. In the following module we explore a clinical case of a patient with severe agitation and risk for violence.

#### Interaction/Assessment:

- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Management of the Severely Agitated Patient (Formative assessment: 90 mins)
- Topic Quiz – Management of the Severely Agitated Patient (Summative assessment: 30 mins)

#### 4. Getting to know your drugs: Pharmacology of Sedative Drugs

**Module Summary:** A wide variety of sedative drugs are available to assist with the management of severe agitation. All of the currently available agents are associated with a risk of potentially life-threatening adverse effects and a thorough working knowledge of their pharmacology is essential. In this module we explore the clinical pharmacology of the commonly used sedative agents and review some of the recent research studies examining this topic.

**Interaction/Assessment:**

- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Pharmacology of Sedative Agents (Formative assessment: 90 mins)
- Topic Quiz – Pharmacology of Sedative Drugs (Summative assessment: 30 mins)

#### 5. Final Post Course Assessment Quiz

- Final Course Quiz – ABCDs of Behavioural Emergencies (Summative assessment: 30 mins)