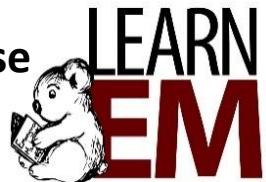


ABCDs of Acute Behavioural Emergencies Online Course



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Latest Review January 2025

Accreditation: RACGP (Activity Number 404226) & ACRRM (Activity Number: 39762) for the 2026-2028 triennium

Learning Outcomes:

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

1. Outline the immediate priorities in the assessment of the patient presenting with disturbed behaviour
2. List the major medical causes for disturbed thinking/behaviour
3. Describe the role of Involuntary Detention in the management of behavioural disturbance
4. Identify the risk factors and examination findings indicating the potential for violence or self harm
5. Describe the important classes of drugs used for the management of acute agitation

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 with a total course time of 6 hours.

The four topics are

1. The ABCDE Approach to Behavioural Disturbance
2. Medical Causes and Legal Considerations
3. Management of the Agitated Patient
4. Pharmacology of Sedative Drugs

Outline of the Program

1. ABCDE 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:

- Chapter reading: ABCDS of Emergency Medicine: Triage and Clinical Assessment
- Chapter reading: ABCDs of Emergency Medicine: Risk Assessment
- Video eTutorial: Agitate Patient – Priorities in Assessment
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Approach to the Patient with Behavioural Disturbance
- Topic Quiz – Approach to the Patient with Behavioural Disturbance

2. Medical Causes and Legal Considerations

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:

- Chapter reading: ABCDs of Emergency Medicine – Medical Clearance
- Chapter reading: ABCDs of Emergency Medicine – Detention and Restraint
- Video eTutorial – Agitated Patient – Medical Clearance
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Medical Clearance
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Involuntary Detention
- Topic Quiz – Medical Clearance / Involuntary Detention

3. Management of the Agitated Patient

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:

- Chapter readings: ABCDs of Emergency Medicine – Management of Severe Agitation
- Video eTutorial: Managing Acute Delirium
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Management of the Severely Agitated Patient
- Topic Quiz – Management of the Severely Agitated Patient

4. 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:

- Chapter readings: ABCDs of Emergency Medicine – Pharmacology of Sedative Agents
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Pharmacology of Sedative Agents
- Topic Quiz – Pharmacology of Sedative Drugs

5. Final Post Course Assessment Quiz

- Final Course Quiz – ABCDs of Behavioural Emergencies