

Medical Emergencies in Primary Care



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Patients with life threatening illness may present to the GP surgery for medical care. Early recognition and treatment are essential in most cases to avoid serious long term morbidity or even unexpected death. This course focuses on these presentations and draws on a symptom based approach to review the recognition and treatment for a range of life-threatening emergencies including anaphylaxis, acute myocardial ischaemia, abdominal disease in the elderly and acute headache.

Learning Outcomes:

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

1. Identify the characteristic clinical markers associated with life threatening anaphylaxis
2. Identify the early clinical findings for developing upper airway obstruction
3. Describe the principles for assessing patients presenting with acute headache
4. List the major life-threatening causes for acute headache
5. List Red Flags indicating a high risk for serious illness in the patient with abdominal pain
6. Describe patterns and location of the pain that assist clinical diagnosis
7. Describe the principles for assessing patients presenting with acute chest pain
8. List the major life-threatening causes for acute chest pain

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 6.5 hours.

The four topics are

1. Acute Anaphylaxis - Recognition and Emergency Management
2. Severe Headache - Red flags for Serious disease
3. Acute Abdominal Pain - Assessment and Investigation
4. Cardiac Chest Pain - Immediate Management and ECG diagnosis

Outline of the Program

1. Acute Anaphylaxis

Module summary: Acute Anaphylaxis is a severe hypersensitivity reaction characterised by cardiovascular collapse and respiratory compromise. Symptoms develop rapidly often within several minutes, (but may develop within seconds to as long as an hour), after contact with the allergen. Management involves assessment of the patients airway, breathing and circulation and the immediate administration of Adrenaline. Additional therapies include nebulised Salbutamol, IV Fluids, IV Glucagon, Vasopressors and Steroids.

Interaction/Assessment:

- Video eTutorial : Introduction to Medical Emergencies in Primary Care
- Chapter Readings: ABCDs of Emergency Medicine - Acute Anaphylaxis
- Video eTutorial : Acute Anaphylaxis
- Video eTutorial: Using an EpiPen in Anaphylaxis
- Interactive Clinical Casebook: Acute anaphylaxis
- Topic Quiz – Acute Anaphylaxis

2. Acute Severe Headache

Module summary: In this module we will consider the serious causes that need to be considered in acute headache and their distinctive clinical features. The "red flags" for serious disease are reviewed and provide important clues for identifying the patient at high risk for serious disease. The module concludes with a review of the evidence based pharmacological management of migraine and tension headache.

Interaction/Assessment:

- Chapter Readings: ABCDS of Emergency Medicine – Clinical Assessment
- Video eTutorial: Assessment and Management of Acute Headache
- Interactive Clinical Casebook – Acute Headache
- Topic Quiz – Acute Headache

3. Acute Abdominal Pain

Module Summary: Acute abdominal pain is a common cause of serious illness. It is vital to have a sound approach to the assessment, investigation and management of patients presenting with abdominal pain as presentations with serious pathology can be subtle and easily missed. This is particularly true in specific populations such as the elderly.

Compared to younger patients, acute abdominal pain in the elderly is associated with a high rate of misdiagnosis. Important considerations when assessing the elderly patient with abdominal pain include the high incidence of serious disease in this population and an appreciation that “atypical” presentations for serious and life-threatening conditions are “typical” in this patient group.

This module explores the assessment of an elderly patient with abdominal pain and identifies red flags and clinical examination findings indicating a high risk for serious illness.

Interaction/Assessment:

- Chapter Reading: ABCDS of Emergency Medicine – Acute Abdominal Pain
- Chapter Reading: ABCDS of Emergency Medicine – Abdominal Pain in the Elderly
- Video eTutorial: Acute Abdominal Pain
- Interactive Clinical Casebook – Acute Abdominal pain
- Topic Quiz – Acute Abdominal Pain

4. Acute Chest Pain

Module summary: Chest pain, although a common presentation, remains one of the most difficult presentations to assess and treat because of the risk of missing life-threatening disease. In this topic the approach to the patient with acute chest pain is discussed in detail with the aim of providing a clinical framework to assist the clinician with undertaking assessment and management of patients presenting with acute myocardial ischaemia.

Interaction/Assessment:

- Chapter Reading: ABCDS of Emergency Medicine – Acute Chest Pain Clinical Assessment
- Video eTutorial: Acute Chest Pain
- Interactive Clinical Casebook – Acute Chest Pain
- Topic Quiz – Acute Chest Pain

5. Final Post Course Assessment Quiz

Final Course Quiz – Medical Emergencies in Primary Care