

Bridging Course September 2023

Patient Partner Scenario for Breathlessness in a Hospital Setting

The 6 students in this group are going to join the University of Aberdeen medical course, year 3. They have been taught already at different universities in St. Andrews or Malaysia. This tutorial is to help them revise their history-taking and communication skills. Different students may take different sections of this history. After each student you will be asked by the tutor to give the student feedback about his/her interview skills – please make sure that you give balanced feedback by offering the impact of something you disliked followed by a description of what you liked. It is also helpful for students to suggest things they might improve e.g. “You could slow your speech down a bit because I didn’t catch your name” or “I felt as if you were not interested in me when you looked at your watch”.

Setting: Acute Medical Initial Assessment Unit (AMIA) ARI

Name: Own choice

DOB: 05.05.56 - 67 years

ID BRACELET REQUIRED

Male or Female patient

History of health problem

Presenting complaint

You were admitted to hospital this morning as an emergency because you had worsening breathlessness. You hardly slept last night feeling short of breath most of the time.

History of presenting complaint

If asked when your breathlessness started, you first felt a bit short of breath 2 months ago. This seemed to happen when you walked up stairs or when you walked to the shops up a slight hill near your house. If asked what makes it better, say that initially you felt less breathless when you sat down or stopped walking.

If the student asks another open question, then feel free to respond with the following:

Over the last month the breathlessness has been getting slowly worse. You started to worry when you felt short of breath just sitting doing nothing – a few days ago. You didn’t want to mention this to your husband/wife but last night was awful and your husband/wife phoned 111-NHS 24 and had to take you in the car to see the out of hours’ doctor. The GP sent you up to this medical ward and said that you might have fluid in your chest.

If specifically asked

You have had a cough most mornings for years –usually nothing comes up but then last week you coughed up some clear/white spit several times a day (a couple spoons full). You have started getting short of breath lying flat. If asked by the student if anything helps the breathlessness, say that you have found that sleeping with 3 pillows has helped. If asked, you have not noticed any blood in your spit or mucus. You have some wheeze (if asked - more of a rumble sometimes in your chest) when walking outside. Both your ankles have become more swollen over the last 2 months and your shoes feel tight. This swelling gets worse towards the end of the day.

Other symptoms if specifically asked

You have not had any chest pain. You have not noticed any leg pain in your calves when you are walking. You haven’t felt well over the last few months. You’ve noticed that you’ve lost some weight (maybe half a stone over 4 months) although your diet hasn’t changed, and you have been very tired. You’ve not been playing golf as much as you would like or working in the garden.

Your concerns and expectations (if asked)

You want to know what’s wrong with you. You’ve had some blood tests and a chest X-ray since coming into hospital.

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Where appropriate please mention that you are worried. If asked if you have any specific concerns/worries - mention one concern at a time.

- The breathlessness is worrying you and the doctor you saw overnight said that you might have fluid in your chest.
- You have even checked this on the internet and know that there are many conditions that can cause you to be short of breath – most of them seem serious.

Past medical history:

- Underactive Thyroid. 2 years ago – you lacked energy, so the GP checked your blood and found that your thyroid was underactive. You need to have a blood test once a year now and it was normal 6 months ago.
- If female - In hospital for the births of her two children – no problems with either delivery.
- You had your gallbladder removed 10 years ago.

Drugs/medicines

Levothyroxine tablet 150 micrograms a day – once a day for underactive thyroid.

Paracetamol caplets – you buy these from the supermarket and take very occasionally if you have a headache. You haven't taken any for 4 weeks.

Allergies

Amoxicillin capsules. If asked what happens when you take it, let the student know that it gave you an itchy rash.

Family history

- Father died aged 73 years – lung cancer
- Mother died aged 84 years – not sure of cause of death – just “old age.”
- You had an older sister who died aged 70 years, just over a year ago – Chronic Bronchitis you think. Not a great shock as she was a heavy smoker and had been more or less house bound and using oxygen for the last year or so before she died.
- Younger brother – aged 65 years. Generally, very fit and very careful about his health.
- **If asked-** you have no known illnesses that run in the family.

Social history

Husband/wife lives at home and is in good health. You have been retired for 7 years now. You used to work in a bank and enjoyed it but now you don't really miss it.

You are now a non-smoker. If asked by the student if you have ever smoked say “Yes” and you stopped one year ago after your sister passed away. It was the hardest thing you've ever done, and you needed patches for 3 months, which you got from the local pharmacist. You used to smoke 20 cigarettes a day from the age of 18.

You do not drink alcohol.

Between you and your husband/wife you manage the household chores and shopping, but your husband/wife has had to help more because of your breathing difficulties over the last month. You both live in your own house with the bathroom and bedroom upstairs.

One son lives in Houston with his wife and two children; you fly there to see them nearly every year. One daughter lives locally with her husband. She often visits.

No pets because you take several holidays each year so you would have to find kennels or rely on your daughter which would not be fair on them.