# USMLE-STEP-2 Q&As

United States Medical Licensing Step 2

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**QUESTION 1**

A 35-year-old woman comes into the ER after cutting her wrists for the 10th time. She did this after her boyfriend of 2 weeks left her yesterday. She reports a history of unstable interpersonal relationships, chronic feelings of emptiness, impulsive sexual relationships, and problems with her sense of identity. The one psychotherapeutic technique to avoid would be:

A. therapeutic physical holding sessions to help the patient feel in control

B. clear roles and responsibilities of patient and therapist are established

C. therapist conveys empathic validation

D. flexibility

E. patient and therapist mutually develop a hierarchy of priorities

Correct Answer: A

Physically holding a patient would be a boundary violation. Conveying empathic validation, having clear roles and responsibilities, being flexible, and developing a hierarchy of priorities are all common features of recommended psychotherapy for a patient with borderline personality disorder.

**QUESTION 2**

A 44-year-old man presents with fears that his mathematical abilities have been slowly sucked out of his brain for the last 4 years. He believes an "alien force disguised as a human being" is responsible. To avoid contacting this being, he has isolated himself in a room in a boarding house. His wife divorced him and left with their children. After 10 years teaching math at a local high school, he resigned about 3 years ago. He supports himself by "collecting cans." His affect is blunted. His appearance is disheveled, unshaven, and unwashed. Which of the following hypotheses is the leading hypothesis to explain the patient\\'s psychotic symptoms?

A. serotonin hypothesis

B. biogenic amine hypothesis

C. acetylcholine hypothesis

D. dopamine hypothesis

E. gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA) hypothesis

Correct Answer: D

The dopamine hypothesis of schizophrenia grew from the observations that medications that block dopamine receptors have antipsychotic activity and medications that stimulate dopamine receptors (amphetamines) can induce psychosis. Serotonin abnormalities have been implicated in mood and anxiety disorders. The biogenic amine hypothesis of mood disorders was based on the finding that tricyclic and MAOI drugs are effective in alleviating the symptoms of depression. The GABAergic system has been implicated in anxiety disorders because benzodiazepines which are GABAergic have antianxiety effects. Acetylcholine abnormalities have been associated with dementia.

**QUESTION 3**

A3-year-old boy suddenly begins choking and coughing while eating peanuts. On physical examination he is coughing frequently. He has inspiratory stridor and mild intercostal and suprasternal retractions. Initial management should include which of the following?

A. back blows

B. abdominal thrusts

C. blind finger-sweeps of the hypopharynx

D. permitting him to clear the foreign body by coughing

E. emergency tracheostomy

Correct Answer: D

In the management of foreign body aspiration, it is generally felt that if the victim can speak, breathe, or cough, all interventions are unnecessary and potentially dangerous. When intervention is required, the first maneuver is a series of abdominal thrusts (for children >1 year of age) or back blows (for children 1 year of age or younger). When obstruction persists, foreign bodies sometimes can be removed from the oral cavity or pharynx if they can be seen, but blind finger sweeps of the hypopharynx are not recommended. Emergency tracheostomy, preferably performed by an experienced clinician, is employed only in cases of critical airway obstruction unrelieved by other maneuvers.

**QUESTION 4**

When making recommendations to a state general assembly against routine premarital screening, the State Health Commissioner used the following data to arrive at his conclusions. The state had a young adult population of 100,000. Their actual prevalence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection was 1 per 1000. The best screening test available had a sensitivity of 98% and a specificity of 95%. How many people in this population would have screened false positive?

A. 4995

B. 98

C. 2

D. 100

E. 5000

Correct Answer: A

The following table was constructed using the data in the question. There would be 4995 FPs, 98 TPs, and 2 FNs.

| | Disease | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Present | Absent | Totals |
| Test | | | |
| Positive | 98 | 4995 | 5093 |
| Negative | 2 | 94,905 | 94,905 |
| Totals | 100 | 99,900 | 100,000 |

**QUESTION 5**

A29-year-old nonhelmeted motorcycle driver is involved in a single vehicular crash, resulting in a significant closed-head injury. He is intubated in the field and transported to a level 1 trauma center. On arrival, he is oxygenating well with assisted ventilation and has a normal blood pressure and moderate tachycardia. His Glasgow Coma Score is 7, and his pupils are equal and sluggishly reactive. After stabilization in the emergency department, the patient undergoes a CT scan of the head that demonstrates a small amount of subarachnoid blood and a right frontal lobe contusion with edema with no midline shift. CT scan of the abdomen is normal. The patient is transferred to the ICU. The optimal initial management of this patient\\'s intracranial pressure (ICP) would be which of the following?

A. craniotomy

B. fluid restriction, hyperventilation, and osmotic diuresis

C. fluid restriction, hyperventilation, and ventriculostomy

D. hyperventilation and IV steroids

E. normovolemia, normocarbia, sedation, and ventriculostomy

Correct Answer: E

The guiding principle of management of closed-head injury is to maintain cerebral perfusion and oxygenation; thereby, preventing secondary brain insult. Cerebral perfusion pressure (CPP) is dependent on systemic blood pressure, circulating blood volume, and ICP (i.e., CPP = mean BP - ICP). Normal CPP requires an adequate circulating blood volume with maintenance of normovolemia. Hypercarbia should be avoided because it leads to cerebral vasodilatation and increased ICP. Early insertion of a ventriculostomy is beneficial to permit controlled drainage of CSF as required to maintain a normal ICP. Fluid restriction and hyperventilations hould be avoided in the early stages of management of a closed-head injury. Autoregulation of cerebral blood flow is disrupted in the early phases after head injury. Aggressive hyperventilation with resultant cerebral vasoconstriction may precariously compromise the perfusion to the injured brain and to the surrounding noninjured brain. In patients with deteriorating neurologic status and/ or evidence of increasing ICP that is not well controlled with a ventriculostomy, osmotic diuretics and moderate hyperventilation may be useful adjuncts to therapy. The use of steroids in the management of closed-head injury is not indicated. Craniotomy is indicated for increased ICP attributed to a mass with a midline shift.

**QUESTION 6**

For each item, select the ONE best lettered option that is most closely associated with it. Each lettered heading may be selected once, more than once, or not at all. A 35-year-old woman complains of constipation, hair loss, and dry skin.

A. Cushing\\'s syndrome

B. Addison\\'s disease

C. Klinefelter syndrome

D. hyperparathyroidism

E. hypothyroidism

F. pheochromocytoma

G. acromegaly

H. diabetes insipidus

I. diabetes mellitus

J. polycystic ovarian disease

Correct Answer: E

The most common symptoms seen in patients with hypothyroidism include tiredness, weakness, dry skin, feeling cold, hair loss, difficulty concentrating with poor memory, constipation, and weight gain.

**QUESTION 7**

A pediatrician asks you to see a 13-year-old girl who has not begun to menstruate and has a 6-month history of pelvic and lower abdominal pain at approximately 1-month interval. She has Tanner stage 3 pubic hair and breast development. Her growth spurt occurred about 1 year ago and her current height is 65 in. (165 cm). She has never had sexual intercourse. On examination of her external genitalia the presence of Tanner stage 3 pubic hair is confirmed. The labia are normal. There is no obvious vaginal opening and there is bulging between the labia minora. Which one of the following is the most likely diagnosis?

A. androgen insensitivity syndrome

B. mittelschmerz (ovulation pain)

C. Müllerian and vaginal agenesis

D. gonadal dysgenesis

E. imperforate hymen

Correct Answer: E

The presence of pubertal events except external menstruation and the bulging of the hymen causing retrograde menstruation as a cause of her cyclic pain establish the diagnosis of imperforate hymen. Strictly, these women have cryptomenorrhea, not amenorrhea. Women with mittelschmerz (ovulation pain) menstruate cyclically. While pubertal events except menstruation occur normally in women with Müllerian/ vaginal agenesis, cyclic pain is absent because the uterus is hypoplastic or absent and there is no endometrium to shed. Women with gonadal dysgenesis do not develop breasts or pubic hair and have primary amenorrhea. The most common form of gonadal dysgenesis is 45,X Turner syndrome and affected females are less than 62 in. tall.

**QUESTION 8**

Age-adjusted cancer death rates for men and women reveal an increasing rate for which cancer over the last 20 years?

A. prostate cancer

B. lung cancer in women

C. breast cancer

D. colorectal cancer

E. stomach cancer

Correct Answer: B

The age-adjusted lung cancer mortality rate rose rapidly following adoption of smoking by women. This now has stabilized as the leading cause of cancer death in women.

**QUESTION 9**

A5-year-old girl had been doing well at home and with her playmates until she started kindergarten 1 month ago. She cries whenever her mother and father go to drop her off at school, and she complains of fearing that she will never see them again. She complains of nightmares and refuses to go to school due to severe stomachaches. Which of the following is the most likely diagnosis?

A. generalized anxiety disorder

B. separation anxiety disorder

C. social phobia

D. specific phobia

E. obsessive-compulsive disorder

Correct Answer: B

Separation anxiety disorder is the name given to the problem of a child\\'s developmentally excessive anxiety concerning separation from home and parents. Children who are more globally anxious may suffer from generalized anxiety disorder, while children who avoid playmates may suffer from social phobia. Children who have an unrealistic fear of, for example, dogs, have a specific phobia; whereas, those who suffer from intrusive anxious thoughts that lead them to spend much time performing rituals such as hand washing suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder.

**QUESTION 10**

A 30-year-old man presents to the emergency department with sudden onset of severe epigastric pain and vomiting 3 hours ago. He reports a 6-month history of chronic epigastric pain occurring nearly every day and relieved by antacids. On examination, he appears sweaty and avoids movement. Vital signs reveal a temperature of 100°F, BP of 100/60 mmHg, pulse rate of 110/min, and respiratory rate of 12/min. The remainder of his examination reveals diminished bowel sounds and a markedly tender and rigid abdomen.

A chest x-ray and abdominal films reveal pneumoperitoneum

Which of the following is the most appropriate next diagnostic test?

A. CT scan

B. UGI water-soluble contrast study

C. lower GI water-soluble contrast study

D. abdominal ultrasound

E. none of the above

Correct Answer: E

Perforated duodenal ulcer usually presents as a sudden onset of acute abdominal pain. Examination usually reveals severe abdominal tenderness with rigidity of the abdominal musculature (i.e., an acute abdomen). With a prior history of abdominal pain relieved by antacids, a chronic ulcer that has now perforated is strongly suggested. Perforated colon cancer occurs in an older age group, as well as gastric ulcer. Following plain radiographs that show pneumoperitoneum, no additional diagnostic tests are required and serve only to delay treatment. The treatment is laparotomy and either patch closure of the perforation or definitive operation, the latter being preferred, depending on operative findings. However, the patient must receive fluid resuscitation before laparotomy to avoid hypotension and its consequences. Although nonoperative management for contained perforations has been suggested by some authors, an acute abdomen is an indication for operative management.

**QUESTION 11**

A beekeeper\\'s previously healthy 6-month-old son develops gradual onset of lethargy, poor feeding, constipation, and generalized weakness. On taking a history, you determine that the child has recently been placed on a homemade formula consisting of evaporated milk, water, and honey. Which of the following is the most likely explanation for this symptom complex?

A. sodium intoxication

B. Hirschsprung disease

C. hypothyroidism

D. spinal cord tumor

E. botulism

Correct Answer: E

The child described in the question seems to be afflicted with infant botulism. Clostridium botulinum spores are commonly found in honey, and the toxin responsible for the symptoms described is produced in the infant\\'s GI tract. Therefore, children younger than 1 year should not be fed honey. Hypernatremic dehydration may show some similarities to infant botulism, but the skin and mucous membranes are characteristically dry. Serum sodium level is often greater than 160. Hirschsprung disease would explain constipation but not the other findings listed. Congenital hypothyroidism shows a more insidious onset, with prolonged constipation and weakness. In addition, developmental retardation would likely be present.

**QUESTION 12**

A 4-year-old child presents to your office in July with a history of a low-grade fever (38.1°C) and "s ores" in

his mouth for 2 days. He has been refusing to eat but has been drinking an adequate amount of liquids.

On examination, he is afebrile and seems well hydrated. He has ulcers on his tongue and posterior

pharynx, which are 4 mm in diameter. You also note a few vesicles on his hands and feet, which are 34

mm in size and mildly tender.

Which of the following is the most likely diagnosis?

A. herpes simplex virus (HSV)

B. coxsackie virus

C. aphthous ulcers

D. Behcet syndrome

E. traumatic ulcers

Correct Answer: B

Coxsackie A16 is the major cause of hand, foot, and mouth disease. This is a summer enteroviral illness presenting with classic lesions of the hand, feet, and mouth. Herpetic gingivostomatitis is the most common cause of stomatitis in children aged 13 years. There is often a high fever, fetor oris, refusal to eat, and irritability. The lesions are initially vesicular, and soon form ulcers ranging from 2 to 10 mm in diameter. The tongue, cheek, and gums are usually involved, and there may be submaxillary lymphadenitis. Aphthous ulcerations (canker sores) are painful ulcerations, which present as erythematous, indurated papules that erode to form circumscribed necrotic ulcers with gray fibrinous exudates and erythematous halo. They are 210 mm in diameter, heal spontaneously, and often recur. Behcet syndrome is a multisystem disorder characterized by recurrent oral and genital ulceration, iritis or uveitis, as well as other cutaneous, arthritic, neurologic, vascular, and gastrointestinal (GI) manifestations. It is rare in children. Traumatic oral ulcers may be seen in chronic cheek biters but do not involve extremities.

**QUESTION 13**

A 45-year-old man presents to the physician\\'s office for evaluation of a posterior neck mass. The mass has been present for years, but has slowly enlarged over the last 2 years. Examination reveals a subcutaneous mass that is soft, nontender, and movable. For the above patient with a neck mass, select the most likely diagnosis.

A. thyroid carcinoma

B. cystic hygroma

C. acute suppurative lymphadenitis

D. thyroglossal duct cyst

E. lipoma

F. carotid artery aneurysm

G. mixed parotid tumor (pleomorphic adenoma)

H. laryngeal carcinoma

I. parathyroid adenoma

J. branchial cleft cyst

K. tuberculosis

Correct Answer: E

Lipomas present as soft, subcutaneous masses that arise in all areas of the body. They are treated by simple excision.

**QUESTION 14**

You have performed annual examinations on a young mother for the last 3 years. She and her husband are considering having another child in 5 years, and she would like to restart oral contraceptive pills. You review her medical record and find that she had a normal Pap smear at last year\\'s examination and also the year prior to that.

You recommend that her next Pap smear be performed when?

A. now

B. in 1 year

C. in 2 years

D. in 3 years

E. in 4 years

Correct Answer: D

After two normal Pap smears, women with normal risk can be screened every 3 years. The USPSTF has found no evidence that annual screening provides better outcomes than screening every 3 years. The majority of cervical cancers in the United States occur in women who have never been screened, those who did not receive appropriate follow-up after an abnormal Pap smear, or those who have not been screened within the past 5 years.

**QUESTION 15**

A 34-year-old woman just delivered a 4100-g boy after a 15-hour labor, including a 21/2-hour second stage. During the repair of a midline episiotomy, there is a marked increase in the amount of vaginal bleeding.

Which of the following is the most common cause of immediate postpartum hemorrhage?

A. retained placental fragments

B. uterine atony

C. cervical laceration

D. vaginal laceration

E. disseminated intravascular coagulation

Correct Answer: B

The main mechanism by which hemostasis is achieved following delivery is contraction of the myometrium to compress

the uterine vessels that had been supplying the placenta. Lack of effective myometrial contraction (i.e., uterine atony) is the major cause of postpartum hemorrhage. If the uterus is found to be firmly contracted, then other factors, such as cervical or vaginal lacerations or a coagulopathy, must be sought.