

DYNAMIC LEARNING EXERCISE

INSTRUCTOR KEY

Decision Making Pathways

Individual or small group activity. May also be facilitated with the whole class. Time – 30 minutes (15 minutes to complete/15 minutes follow-up and discussion). May be used in EMT, AEMT, or paramedic classes.

We want our students to think, apply, and make good decisions. To do this, students need solid assessment skills, experience in situations where they must think and apply, and to see a positive result from their efforts. They need to have an "A Ha!" moment where it all comes together. That is what this dynamic exercise is designed to do.

Students are required to identify differences and similarities in patient presentations to help create differential diagnoses. While differential diagnosis requires practitioners to cast a wide net, most of the time there are a small number of very likely causes or the differentials are already narrowed down to those likely causes. This exercise will help students make a solid final diagnosis which results in appropriate protocol selection and treatment decisions.

You will provide the patient information and complaint to the student. Give two possible causes of that complaint. We have provided some examples and exercises for you with the package. Have the student complete the form. Ask students for detailed assessment—not generalities.



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The form will ask students for findings they would suspect in each condition. Be sure this is in detail and with considerations for finings which may be present in both conditions. This helps develop differential diagnostic thinking and prevents biases in reasoning like anchoring on one specific finding. Some of the most important points come at the end of the form in the confounding factors and make-or-break points for the diagnosis.

Facilitation is always important to guide the process—especially the first time you use it.

This is a great exercise to use in your lesson plan at the end of a topic (e.g. respiratory), to keep in your back pocket for a time you finish early and need an activity, or even when you feel the class just needs something other than lecture. We've created pathways for you to use that cover common situations. Feel free to create your own.

This exercise provides three things:

- A sample decision-making pathway
- A blank decision-making pathway for student use
- Pre-filled pathways (patient, complaint, and conditions) for use in class

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PATIENT COMPLAINT

Respiratory Distress

PATIENT INFORMATION

3 Years old

CONDITION 1

Asthma

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Wheezing (Lower Airway)

Asthma History + Meds

Prolonged Expiratory Cycle **COMMON FINDINGS**

Respiratory Distress

Tachycardia

Airway Noises

Sudden Onset

Age Group

CONDITION 2

Foreign Body Airway Obstruction

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Stridor (Upper Airway)

Environment (Small Objects present)

Drooling

Trouble Swallowing

CONFOUNDING FACTORS	MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS	
Can be similar presentation	Lung Sounds	
Both possible in this age group	History	
High Stress Situation	Environment	



DECISION MAKING PATHWAY PATIENT COMPLAINT PATIENT INFORMATION **CONDITION 1 CONDITION 2 SPECIFIC FINDINGS COMMON FINDINGS** SPECIFIC FINDINGS **MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS CONFOUNDING FACTORS**



PATIENT COMPLAINT

Chest Pain

PATIENT INFORMATION

49 year old male patient with a history of hypertension

CONDITION 1

Acute Coronary Syndrome

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

COMMON FINDINGS

CONDITION 2

Dissecting Thoracic Aneurysm

SPECIFIC FINDINGS

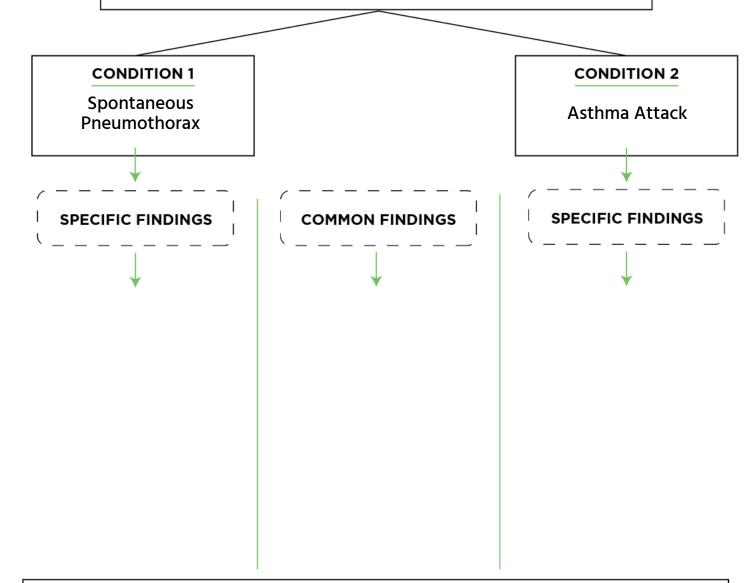
CONFOUNDING FACTORS MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS



PATIENT COMPLAINT Difficulty Breathing

PATIENT INFORMATION

24 year old female developed breathing difficulty during exercise



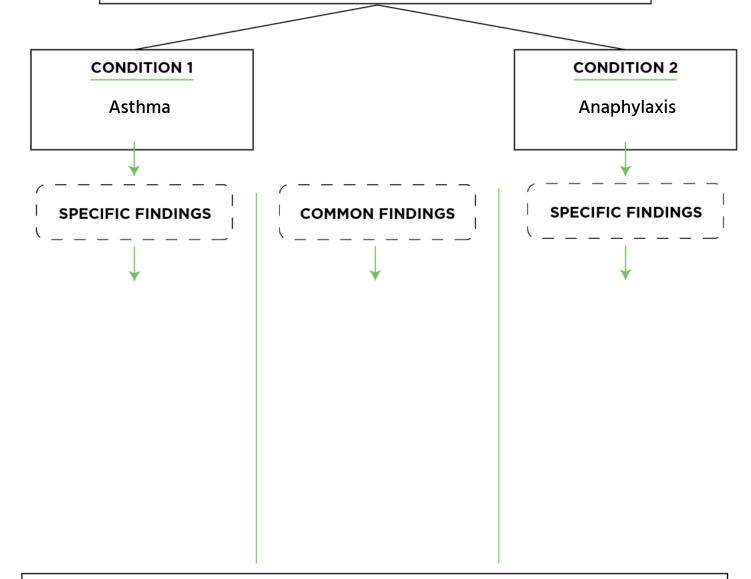
CONFOUNDING FACTORS	MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS



PATIENT COMPLAINT
Difficulty Breathing

PATIENT INFORMATION

An 18 year old was working in the yard



CONFOUNDING FACTORS	MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS

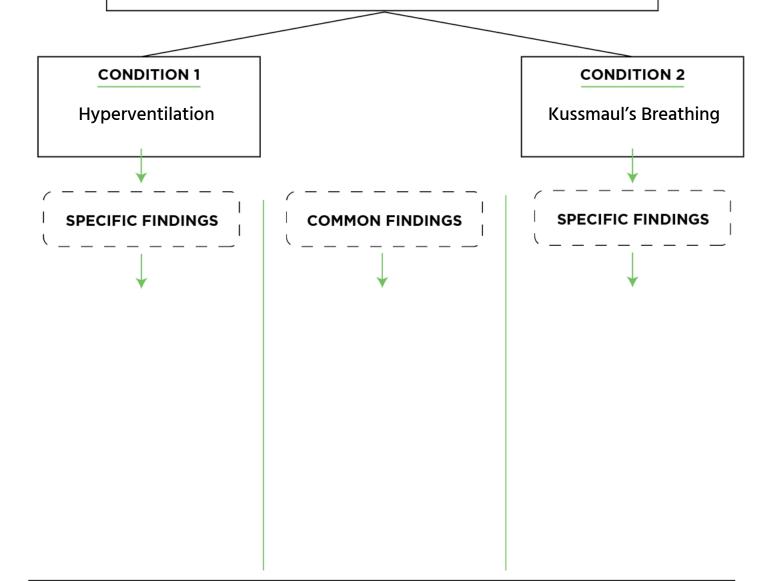


PATIENT COMPLAINT

Anxiety Attack

PATIENT INFORMATION

Roommate reports the patient is having an "anxiety attack"



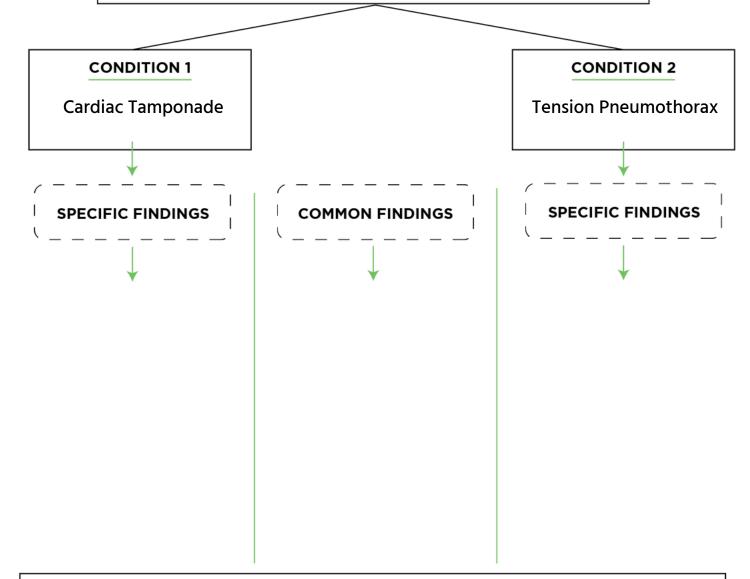
CONFOUNDING FACTORS	MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS



Motor Vehicle Collision

PATIENT INFORMATION

Male patient has been removed from the vehicle by bystanders. He appears unresponsive and tachypneic.



CONFOUNDING FACTORS	MAKE - OR - BREAK POINTS