Chapter 13
Clinical Decision Making

Chapter Goal
- Apply decision-making process to form field impression from information gathered during patient assessment

Learning Objectives
- Compare factors influencing medical care in out-of-hospital environment with other medical settings
- Differentiate between critical life-threatening, potentially life-threatening, & non-life-threatening patient conditions
- Evaluate benefits & shortfalls of protocols, standing orders, & patient care algorithms
Learning Objectives

- Define components, stages, & sequences of critical thinking for EMT-Is
- Apply fundamental elements of critical thinking for EMT-Is
- Describe effects of “fight-or-flight” response & positive & negative effects on decision-making capabilities

Learning Objectives

- Develop strategies for effective thinking under pressure
- Summarize “6 Rs” of putting it all together:
  - Read patient
  - Read scene
  - React
  - Reevaluate
  - Revise management plan
  - Review performance at run critique

Introduction

- Cornerstone of effective EMT-I practice
- Key to success
- Develop management plans
- Possess skills to independently make patient care decisions
- Environmental factors
**Practice Environment**

- Out-of-hospital environment—unique atmosphere

- Spectrum of patients
  - Major trauma
  - Advanced forms of malignancy
  - Chronic diseases
  - Patients with “potentially serious” injuries or illnesses
  - Chronic medical conditions

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**Practice Environment**

- Spectrum of patients
  - Some injuries, illnesses distressful—not life-threatening

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**Practice Environment**

- Guidance & authority
  - Protocols
  - Standing orders
  - Algorithms

- Medical ambiguity
  - Vagueness in symptoms or complaints
  - Limits ability to determine specific diagnosis
Critical Thinking: Components, Stages, & Sequence

- Concept formation
  - Pattern of understanding
  - First concepts—instant call comes in
  - Additional stimuli—as information is relayed
  - Immediate patient environment
  - Physical examination
  - Conscious patient—verbalize chief complaint
  - History
  - General patient affect

Critical Thinking: Components, Stages, & Sequence

- Data interpretation
  - Current information with past education & experience
  - As soon as learning about call
  - Information integrated
  - Attitude will determine how information used

- Application of principle
  - Data are formulated as data are processed
  - Working diagnosis

Critical Thinking: Components, Stages, & Sequence

- Evaluation
  - Constantly reassess patient
  - Routinely reevaluate
  - As new information learned—working diagnosis expanded or changed

- Reflection on action
Fundamental Elements: Critical Thinking

- 8 elements of critical thinking
  - Fund of knowledge
  - Specific & multiple elements of data
  - Information stimuli
  - Medical ambiguity
  - Relevant & irrelevant data
  - Similar situations
  - Contrary situations
  - Assessment-based decisions & construction of arguments

Assessment-Based Patient Management

- Patient acuity spectrum
  - Range of patient presentations
  - Truly life-threatening calls are small
  - Greatest challenge—performing accurate assessments & interventions

Assessment-Based Patient Management

- Thinking under pressure
  - “Fight or flight” response
  - Key to quality performance under pressure

- Mental checklist
  - Stop & think
  - Scan situation
  - Decide & act
  - Maintain clear, concise control
  - Regular & continual reevaluation of patient
Assessment-Based Patient Management

- Facilitating behaviors
  - Patterns of behaviors & actions
  - First rule—stay calm
  - Habit of patient assessment
  - Anticipate potential changes
  - Assessing patient for current acute event

Assessment-Based Patient Management

- Situational awareness
  - Integrate all facets of scene & patient care
  - Overall picture of current event—scene survey
  - Evaluate scene for potential dangers

Assessment-Based Patient Management

- Putting it all together—"The 6 Rs"
  - Read patient
  - Read scene
  - React
  - Reevaluate
  - Revise
  - Review
Summary

- Critical decision making incorporates past experiences & training into almost automatic process; facilitates:
  - Gathering data
  - Synthesizing information
  - Developing working diagnosis

- EMT-I will develop habits that allow:
  - Efficient preparation
  - Assessment
  - Interventions
  - Review

Questions?