



The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

Patron: HRH The Princess Royal

7-9 Breams Buildings
London
EC4A 1DT

Tel +44 (0)207 404 1999
Fax +44 (0)207 067 1267
www.rcem.ac.uk

FRCEM Intermediate Situational Judgement Paper

Sample Questions

For each question candidates are required to select the most appropriate action. For the purpose of the examination, candidates should assume that all of the options are available in the place that they work.

Each stem has been awarded a numerical score, agreed by a group of trained experts, where 4 = most appropriate action and 0 = least appropriate.

Additional questions (added 20/01/2020)

1. CC7 - Prioritisation of patient safety in clinical practice

You have just assessed an elderly patient who has presented following a fall and leave the cubicle to find a nurse to administer pain relief. A nurse approaches you to tell you that the husband of the previous patient you saw needs to speak to you urgently, whilst at the same time a healthcare assistant shows you an ECG with ST elevation.

What is the first action you should take?

- A Apologise to the nurse and healthcare assistant but explain you need to obtain pain relief for the patient with a fall **0**
- B Ask the healthcare assistant to put the patient with ST elevation into the resuscitation room and ask one of the senior doctors to assess them immediately **3**
- C Ask the healthcare assistant to show the ECG to another of the senior doctors whilst you speak to the husband of your previous patient **2**
- D Ask the nurse to get pain relief for your patient whilst you go to assess the patient with ST elevation **4**
- E Go and speak urgently to the husband of your previous patient as you need to clarify the history with him **1**

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2. CC14 - Complaints and medical error

You are treating a fit and healthy 25 year old patient who has been brought to the ED by ambulance following an ankle injury. The patient was given one gram of paracetamol by the triage nurse on their arrival in the ED however the patient tells you that they were also given one gram of paracetamol by the paramedic 30 minutes before their arrival however this is not recorded on the ambulance sheet. They have not had any other analgesia in the past 24 hours.

What is the most appropriate action for you to take?

- A Ask the nurse in charge to speak to the triage nurse about their prescribing practice **2**
- B Contact the ambulance liaison officer and inform them of the documentation error **3**
- C Explain to the patient what has happened and reassure them that no harm should arise from the error **4**
- D No action is required as no harm will result from ingesting two grams of paracetamol in 24 hours **1**
- E Take blood levels for paracetamol at four hours to determine whether they require treatment with n-acetylcysteine **0**

3. CC7 - Prioritisation of patient safety in clinical practice

An 80 year old woman lives in a nursing home and has a DNACPR order in place. She has previously expressed a wish not to be admitted to hospital in the event of deterioration. Whilst you are on shift she is brought to the ED in respiratory distress after an agency nurse called for an ambulance. On arrival, she is moribund with a GCS of 3. Her distressed family are with her and would like her to be returned to her nursing home in accordance with her wishes.

What is the most appropriate way for you to manage this patient?

- A Contact the nursing home and inform them that the patient will be returning to them for end of life care **2**
- B Discuss with the family the difficulty in returning her to the nursing home now as she may die in transit **4**
- C Explain to the family that she is likely to die very soon and move her to a side room **3**
- D Initiate full active treatment as DNACPR does not mean 'do not treat' **0**
- E Recognise that she is dying and has a DNACPR in place and prioritise your other patients **1**

4. CC17 - Principles of medical ethics and confidentiality

A patient, Mrs Connolly, has attended the ED with abdominal pain and collapse. Her husband calls the department asking for an update on his wife's condition. Mrs Connolly is pregnant and you suspect that she has an ectopic pregnancy and she is awaiting an urgent ultrasound scan. She does not want her husband to know that she is pregnant.

What is the most appropriate way to deal with this situation?

- A Ask Mrs Connolly to speak to her husband and tell him what she feels appropriate **4**
- B Ask the nurse to tell Mr Connolly that you are not available at the moment **1**
- C Tell Mr Connolly that his wife is very unwell and why as he is her next of kin **0**
- D Tell Mr Connolly that you are awaiting test results and he should come to the ED **2**
- E Tell Mr Connolly that you cannot provide clinical details over the telephone **3**

5. CC5 - Decision making and clinical reasoning

You find a small packet of white powder in the pocket of a patient who has been admitted following a likely drug overdose. He is currently intubated and ventilated and you are unable to ask him about this.

What is the most appropriate thing to do with the white powder?

- A Call the police and give it to them **2**
- B Dispose of the powder in the secure waste **1**
- C Give it to the pharmacist and ask them to deal with it **4**
- D Lock it in the controlled drug cabinet **3**
- E Lock it in the patient property cupboard **0**

6. CC19 - Legal framework for practice

You are seeing a 40 year old patient who has presented with neck pain. He told the triage nurse that he was the driver in a low speed traffic collision today and that this is his only injury. He was advised at the scene by the police to attend. You can see from his notes that he has recently been diagnosed with epilepsy and has had several seizures in the last month. His clinic letter clearly states that he has been told not to drive and that he agreed to contact the DVLA. When you mention this, he says that the triage nurse was mistaken and that he was a passenger, not the driver.

What is the first action you should take in this situation?

- A Contact the DVLA yourself as you feel confident that he has been driving despite advice **1**
- B Contact the traffic police to ask if they can provide corroboration of the incident details **2**
- C Discuss your suspicion with the patient and let him know that you are obliged to take this further **3**
- D Explain the importance of not driving until he is seizure free, but accept his explanation and discharge him with advice **0**
- E Speak to the triage nurse and confirm the history that he provided on arrival **4**

7. CC8 - Teaching and training

You are aware that there have been concerns about one of the FY2 doctors who is regarded as being overconfident. Whilst working with her you become aware that she has ignored your advice regarding the management of a patient with a knee injury.

After ensuring that the patient receives appropriate treatment, what is the most appropriate approach in relation to the FY2 doctor?

- A Ask the nurses to inform you of any concerns they have about the doctor's decisions **2**
- B Ensure that you review all of her patients prior to discharge for the rest of the shift **3**
- C Speak privately to the doctor to explore her reasons for not acting on your advice **4**
- D Telephone the consultant on-call for advice as you feel unable to continue to supervise her **1**
- E Tell her this is not acceptable and complete a Clinical Incident Form **0**

8. CC12 - Relationships with patients and communication within a consultation

A patient who was seen last night with back pain and dysuria has returned on Saturday morning for an MR of her spine to exclude cauda equina syndrome. She was told by a junior colleague last night that it would be done this morning however there is no MRI service out of hours. You have explained this to the patient and apologised for the inconvenience, but she is angry and insisting that it is an emergency and that she will take this further. There are no red flags for cauda equina syndrome documented in the notes and her urinalysis is consistent with infection therefore you feel there is no indication for an MR scan at all.

What is the best way for you to deal with this situation?

- A Advise the patient that you disagree with your colleague's assessment last night and apologise that senior advice was not sought at the time **3**
- B Agree to arrange an outpatient MR scan to reassure the patient and avoid a complaint **1**
- C Apologise for the inconvenience and inform the patient that the delay is due to the radiology department protocols **0**
- D Examine the patient and explain that with the urine results she does not require a scan **4**
- E Advise the patient about the formal complaint procedure and inform your consultant that they should expect a letter **2**

9. CC4 - Time and workload management

You have been approached by one of your colleagues who is asking you to swap shifts as he tells you he has a family engagement. This is the third time that he has asked to swap an early shift on Saturday so that he can go out on a Friday night and it would mean that you would be working until late on Friday then early on Saturday with a break of eight hours.

What should you do?

- A Ask him to speak to the rota co-ordinator to look for other options **4**
- B Explain that you are unable to help on this occasion **3**
- C Raise your concerns about his professionalism with his educational Supervisor **2**
- D Reluctantly agree to swap the shift as requested **0**
- E Say you will swap if you can find someone to do your Friday late shift **1**

10. CC15 - Communication with colleagues and cooperation & CC24 - Personal behaviour

One of your colleagues texts you to say that she feels too tired to come to work and asks you to say that she is sick. You know that she is not unwell, but had a busy shift following a late night. Staffing levels are good and the department is not busy today.

What should you do?

- A Advise her that she should come in to work if she is not unwell **3**
- B Advise that she stays off social media and returns to work tomorrow **1**
- C Discuss your concerns about her with your supervisor **2**
- D Reassure her as you may need her to do the same for you in future **0**
- E Tell her to contact the consultant herself to discuss how she feels **4**

11. CC17 - Principles of medical ethics and confidentiality

Whilst doing the annual RCEM audit on time to analgesia that has been registered by the trust, you come across the records of a well known celebrity.

What should you do?

- A As you have legitimate access to the records you are entitled to review them **3**
- B Contact your caldicott guardian for advice on how to proceed **1**
- C Do not proceed with this record any further due to confidentiality **0**
- D Inform the audit team that you have accessed the records for audit purposes **2**
- E Only use the relevant portion of the records to help with the audit **4**

Original questions (added 01/06/2017)

12. CC4 - Time management

You have a meeting with your educational supervisor next week. At the last meeting you set a number of goals and objectives but have not had time to complete any of them. You feel overwhelmed by the amount of things you have to do in the little time available.

What is the most appropriate action for you to take?

- A Offer to do the night shift for a colleague the night before so you can legitimately cancel the meeting **0**
- B Make a list of the outstanding actions and aim to complete the easiest ones before the meeting **3**
- C Cancel the meeting and aim to rearrange it for a later date when you have completed some of the actions **2**
- D Attend the meeting and discuss with your supervisor how you can achieve the objectives within a defined time frame **4**
- E Cancel your social engagements for the rest of the week and do some work after your nightshifts in order to complete the objectives **1**

13. Patient focus CC12

The department is very busy with a three hour wait. You are approached by a lady who has been waiting to be seen for 30 minutes. She is very upset because she wants to be seen straight away as she has slight vaginal bleeding and is ten weeks pregnant with IVF twins. All of her observations are normal and there are ten people with the same triage category in front of her.

What is the most appropriate action for you to take?

- A See her straight away to try to alleviate her anxiety and to avoid a complaint **0**
- B Ask the nurse to call the gynaecology SHO to see if they can see her directly **3**
- C Tell her there are lots of people who have waited longer and that she will have to be seen in order of clinical priority **1**
- D Ask a nurse to see her whilst she is waiting to be seen and to try and reassure her **2**
- E Apologise for the delay and reassure her that her observations are normal and she will be seen as soon as possible **4**

14. Professional integrity CC14, Problem solving CC5

At the end of your shift the biochemistry technician rings to inform you that a patient you discharged earlier has a high positive troponin. He is young and presented with atypical chest pain and had no cardiovascular risk factors. His ECG and other investigations were all normal. He was symptom free and keen to go home. You did not realise that the test had been sent at triage and you are surprised by the result.

What is the most appropriate action for you to take?

- A You would not have requested a troponin therefore it should not influence your decision making as the result is likely to be erroneous **0**
- B Call the patient to establish that he remains well and advise him to reattend if he develops further chest pain **1**
- C Arrange for the patient to attend the next day for urgent cardiology consultant review **2**
- D Recall the patient for a repeat troponin and ask your colleague to review the patient and arrange appropriate ongoing management **4**
- E Submit an adverse incident report and ask the medical registrar to recall the patient for review **3**

15. Problem Solving CC8

You are the team leader in a major trauma resuscitation. The radiology registrar disagrees with the decision to carry out a whole body CT scan.

What is the most appropriate action for you to take?

- A Tell him that you have clinical responsibility for the decision and believe that the patient needs a whole body CT scan **3**
- B Call the radiology consultant to discuss the indications for whole body imaging **2**
- C Listen to his concerns and if you feel they are justified modify your decision accordingly **4**
- D Agree to observe the patient for an hour and then review the need for imaging **0**
- E Ask the general surgeon on the team to decide whether the scan is justified **1**

16. Decision Making CC11

A 40 year old man with a history of alcoholism and recurrent attendances to the ED, is admitted to the observation ward overnight after being found asleep in the street intoxicated, with a reduced GCS. The following morning the nurse tells you that he wants to take his own discharge. His GCS is now 15 and she tells you he is back to his normal self.

What is the best course of action for you to take?

- A. Confirm he has capacity and then allow him to leave as you know he will return at some point **3**
- B. Refer him to the alcohol liaison team for follow up in by the community alcohol outreach team **4**
- C. Ask him if he will stay to have some pabrinex before he goes as this is an opportunity to supplement him **2**
- D. Advise him to stop drinking immediately as it is only a matter of time before he sustains a serious injury whilst drunk **0**
- E. Prescribe a reducing course of chlordiazepoxide for him to commence when he gets home **1**

Additional questions (added 12/09/2017)

Q17.

An elderly woman presents to the ED at 10am complaining of difficulty breathing. She has had numerous attendances in the past with mild exacerbations of COPD and has been admitted overnight on two occasions in the past week but was sent home the following morning following respiratory review. On examination she appears very anxious however her observations are all within normal limits and respiratory and cardiovascular examinations are normal.

What is the best management plan for this patient?

- A. Admit her under the medical team with the diagnosis of acute exacerbation of COPD **1**
- B. Ask the COPD specialist nurse to see her in the department and to arrange community follow up **4**
- C. Explain to the patient that her difficulty breathing is most likely due to anxiety and advise her to see her GP **2**
- D. Explain to the patient that she should stop attending the ED as she has no evidence of an acute problem **0**
- E. See the patient with a relative and reassure them that she does not need admission but may benefit from more social support **3**

Q18.

You have been looking after a patient who has presented with an isolated, lateral malleolus fracture that requires surgery. He has been reviewed by the orthopaedic team who have arranged for him to come back for surgery in a few days. He has been rude to the nursing staff and is now causing a disruption and is refusing to have a plaster because he wants his operation tonight. He is demanding to speak to your consultant who is busy in resus with a polytrauma.

How would you manage this situation?

- A. Ask orthopaedics to admit the patient with a view to expediting his operation **0**
- B. Ask your consultant to speak to the patient once she is finished with the trauma **1**
- C. Ask orthopaedics to review the patient again and explain their management plan **3**
- D. Explain the importance of having plaster to prevent complications and why his operation will not happen tonight **4**
- E. Explain that his behaviour is unacceptable and ask him to leave **2**

Q19.

A 75 year old woman attends with a persistent cough. She has a chest x-ray and is discharged with a diagnosis of a chest infection and prescribed appropriate antibiotics. The subsequent report shows a mass that is suspicious for malignancy.

What is the best action for you to take?

- A. Contact the medical team and ask them to arrange admission for investigation **0**
- B. Contact the patient and explain that they have an abnormal chest x-ray that requires further investigation and refer for urgent follow-up **4**
- C. Copy the report to the patient's GP and send the patient a letter telling them to make an appointment with their GP **3**
- D. Recall the patient to the ED for an urgent CT chest **2**
- E. Telephone the patient and tell them they may have lung cancer and to contact their GP urgently **1**

Q20.

You are asked by your FY2 colleague to review a patient who has attended complaining of a headache. She does not speak any English and her 11 year old son is translating. Your FY2 feels she is not getting the full picture about the headache but other than hypertension she has found no abnormality on examination. You are busy in the resuscitation room and there is a three hour wait to be seen in majors.

What is the most appropriate next step?

- A. Advise your FY2 to admit the patient for further investigation due to department pressures **1**
- B. Advise the FY2 to use the translation telephone service to clarify the history in more detail **4**
- C. Ask the FY2 to find out if there are any staff members in the hospital who are able to translate **3**
- D. Ask the FY2 to use a translation App on their smart phone to rule out any concerning features **2**
- E. Given the normal examination, reassure the FY2 that they can discharge the patient with analgesia **0**

Q21.

You are assessing an elderly man who has presented with a history of falls, general deterioration and weight loss. His family approach you and tell you they have suspected for some time he has a serious illness but that he has told them that if he was ever diagnosed with a terminal condition that he would not want to know. You then find that his chest x-ray shows an obvious malignant lesion of his right lung.

What is the most appropriate action for you to take?

- A. Talk to his family in private to gain more clarity about how and when he expressed these wishes **3**
- B. Talk to the patient and ask him for his views on what information he would like about his illness **4**
- C. Talk to the patient and inform him sensitively of the chest x-ray findings **1**
- D. Tell him he needs admission to hospital as the chest x-ray is abnormal and requires further investigation **2**
- E. Tell the family your suspected diagnosis and leave it to them as to how much the patient should be informed **0**