

THE PHYSICAL EXAM "LITANIES"

In tutorials conducted with candidates who have previously failed the Oral Board Exam, a common problem is an inadequate, unfocused physical examination. As a result, the candidate frequently does not elicit a positive physical finding or simply runs out of time. To ensure your best performance, the following "litanies" should be memorized and practiced during case simulations at an Oral Board course or private tutorial.

A Major Medical Emergency (Unstable Patient)

ABC Assessment

1. Airway

- a. Can the patient speak to you?
- b. Is the patient handling oral secretions?
- c. Does the patient tolerate an oral airway?
- d. Are there any abnormal noises while breathing?

If the patient cannot speak or handle oral secretions and tolerates an oral airway, definitive airway management is needed.

2. Breathing: When I listen to the lungs, what do I hear?

3. Circulation: Are the heart sounds (heart tones, murmurs, gallops, rub) normal?

4. Disability: Is the patient responsive to verbal or painful stimuli? Oriented? Have purposeful movement?

5. Exposure: Instruct the nurse to expose the patient completely.

Secondary Survey

1. HEENT examination: Any meningeal signs? (The neck should not be manipulated in a trauma patient.) Any signs of trauma? Are the pupils equal, round, and reactive to light?

2. Anterior neck

- a. Adults: Thyroid? Carotids? Is the trachea midline?
- b. Children: Stridor?

3. Are the heart sounds normal?

4. Is the chest clear?

5. Abdomen

- a. Is there anything abnormal on inspection or palpation?
- b. Are the bowel sounds normal?

6. External genitalia

7. Rectal examination

8. Extremities

- a. Can the patient move all of his or her extremities?
- b. Are the pulses strong and equal bilaterally?
- c. Are the deep tendon reflexes intact? Babinski signs?

9. Back: Is there anything unusual on inspection or palpation?

10. Skin: Is there anything unusual about the skin (color, texture, consistency, rashes)?