

Case Study Using ACE

Case History:

Mr. C. is a 70 year old widower. His wife died two years ago and he has a daughter and three sons. His relationship with his children is marked by considerable conflict. He was recently hospitalized with gangrene in his right foot and lower leg. Problems with his foot began three years ago when he had an infection in a toe in his right foot which became gangrenous. It was then that he discovered that he was diabetic. The toe was amputated. Last year, he bruised his right leg while getting into a bus. The bruise developed into gangrene which resulted in an operation 6 months ago where a portion of his foot was amputated. At that time an arterial bypass was done to decrease the likelihood that gangrene would recur. He went from the hospital to a rehabilitation centre, where he remained for five months. It was found that he had gangrene in the remainder of the foot. He was started on intravenous antibiotics with no response. A below knee operation was then suggested to him. On the morning of the operation he withdrew his consent and went home to stay with his daughter for three days. He has now been brought back to hospital by his daughter. Mr. C. has been unhappy since the death of his wife. He does not wish to burden his children, and he does not believe the operation will cure him.

EXAMPLES OF SCORING

1. Able to Understand Medical Problem		
Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
What problem are you having right now?	<i>My foot hurts. I can't walk.</i>	YES
What problem are you having right now? Do you have a foot problem?	<i>I don't know. Yes, I can't walk.</i>	UNSURE
What is your most serious medical problem right now? Do you have a foot problem?	<i>I don't know. I don't know/no.</i>	NO
2. Able to Understand Proposed Treatment		
Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
What is the treatment for [your foot]?	<i>They will cut my leg off below-knee.</i>	YES
What is the treatment for [your foot]? Can you have an operation?	<i>I don't know. You tell me. Yes, they can cut off my leg. [*Needs further discussion to clarify that operation is below knee amputation, not entire leg.]</i>	UNSURE

What is the treatment for [your foot]? Can you have an operation?	<i>I don't know.</i> <i>I don't know/no.</i>	NO
3. Able to Understand Alternatives to Proposed Treatment		
Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
Are there any other treatments?	<i>I was taking antibiotics.</i>	YES
Are there any other treatments? Can you take antibiotics?	<i>Nothing works.</i> <i>Yes.</i>	UNSURE
Are there any other treatments? Can you take antibiotics?	<i>I don't know.</i> <i>I don't know.</i>	NO
4. Able to Understand Option of Refusing Proposed Treatment (including withholding or withdrawing treatment)		
Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
What are your other options?	<i>You can't take off my leg unless I sign.</i>	YES
Can you refuse surgery?	<i>Yes.</i>	UNSURE
Can you refuse surgery?	<i>I don't know.</i>	NO
5. Able to Appreciate Reasonable Foreseeable Consequences of Accepting Proposed Treatment		
Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
What could happen if you have surgery?	<i>I could end up in a wheelchair. [*Needs further discussion about rehabilitation/prosthesis / chance of recovering independence.]</i>	YES
What could happen if you have surgery? Could surgery help you live longer?	<i>I don't know.</i> <i>Yes.</i>	UNSURE
Could surgery help you live longer?	<i>I don't know/no.</i>	NO
6. Able to Appreciate Reasonably Foreseeable Consequences of Refusing Proposed Treatment (including withholding or withdrawing proposed treatment)		
Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring

What could happen if you don't have surgery?	<i>I could die. I could have blood poisoning.</i>	YES
What could happen if you don't have surgery? Can you get sicker/die without the surgery?	<i>I don't know.</i> <i>Yes. [*Try rediscussing consequences and repeat the questions. If no better answer, score unsure.]</i>	UNSURE
What could happen if you don't have surgery? Can you get sicker/die without the surgery?	<i>I don't know/nothing.</i> <i>I don't know. [*Try rediscussing consequences and repeat the questions. If no better answer, score no.]</i>	NO

7a. The person's decision is affected by Depression

Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
Why don't you want to have surgery?	<i>I'm a bad person. I've had a bad life. I deserve to die. I'm being punished. I'm not worth it.</i>	YES [definitely depressed]
Why don't you want to have surgery?	<i>Nothing seems to work. I have no hope. I'm very sad. I'm all alone. I've suffered too much.</i>	UNSURE [possibly depressed]
Why don't you want to have surgery?	<i>I've lived a full and complete life. I don't want to be in a wheelchair because I need to be independent. [*Needs further discussion about rehabilitation/prosthesis / chance of recovering independence.]</i>	NO [not depressed]

7b. The Person's Decision is Affected by Delusions/Psychosis

Sample Questions	Sample Responses	Suggested Scoring
Why don't you want surgery?	<i>You are a vampire.</i>	YES [definitely delusional]
Why don't you want surgery?	<i>You're trying to kill me. You want me to be a cripple.</i>	UNSURE [possibly delusional]

Why don't you want surgery?	<i>I don't want to be in a wheelchair. [*Needs further discussion about rehabilitation/prosthesi s/chance of recovering independent mobility.]</i>	NO [not delusional]
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Why don't you want surgery?	<i>You are a vampire.</i>	YES [definitely delusional]
Why don't you want surgery?	<i>You're trying to kill me. You want me to be a cripple.</i>	UNSURE [possibly delusional]
Why don't you want surgery?	<i>I don't want to be in a wheelchair. [*Needs further discussion about rehabilitation/prosthesi s/chance of recovering independent mobility.]</i>	NO [not delusional]

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