

Unit 1: Overview of Critical Care Nursing

ONLINE CONTENT (1H)

Unit Objectives:

- Select appropriate nursing interventions to manage common problems and needs of critically ill patients. (1,6,)*
- Develop strategies to manage issues related to caregivers of critically ill patients. (1,2,6)*
- Apply the principles of hemodynamic monitoring to the nursing and interprofessional management of patients receiving monitoring. (1,2,6,7)*

*Course Objectives

Assignment:

Review- Unit 1: Overview of Critical Care Nursing PowerPoint.
Read the case study, then answer the case study questions below.

CASE STUDY

- ▶ Margaret Mayfield is a 62 year old female who has been admitted from the ED to the critical care unit, after calling 911 due to severe fatigue, weakness, and fever. Her past medical history includes: dwarfism, HTN, hyperlipidemia, diabetes mellitus, and has a chronic Foley catheter due to urinary retention. She lives alone in an apartment and has no family members. Her friend is her POA for healthcare, and is the only contact listed. She has a home health aide visit once a week to assist her with bathing and all of her meals are delivered from local take-out restaurants. She utilizes a walker at home, however reports she hasn't been out of bed for the last several days due to weakness and fever. She uses a private ambulance service to go to physician appointments; this is the only time she gets out of her apartment for the last three years. Home medications include carvedilol, simvastatin, aspirin, and insulin. She does not have her medications with her and does not know the doses.

Case Study Questions

- ▶ As the critical care nurse caring for her, what overall concerns do you have?

I would be concerned that the patient could have a UTI from the chronic catheter. I would be concerned with the patient living at home alone and not able to care for herself properly with her medical history. She most likely is not getting proper nutrition from take-out restaurants to comply with a special diet low in NA+, sugar and fats for a patient with diabetes, HTN, and hyperlipidemia. The patient is at risk for developing pneumonia and pressure wounds from not getting out of bed for several days. Although she is weak from her current problem, laying in bed for days will also contribute to the patient having weakness. The patient could also experience some depression from not getting out of her house in the past 3 years other than for medical appointments. The patient might not comply with her medications as prescribed since she does not know the dosages. The immediate concern is finding out her medication dosages from her POA, home health aide, PCP or pharmacy so her medications can be prescribed correctly while in the hospital.

- ▶ Describe ways in which you would communicate with her and her POA for healthcare. Include what topics you would discuss at this time in her hospitalization.

First, to help ensure that the patient and POA are in a state of readiness to learn, I would try to decrease any anxiety that they might be experiencing. I can do this by explaining to them the purpose of medical equipment being used, decrease environmental stimuli as much as possible to create a quiet and relaxing environment, encourage them to ask any questions and be an active listener and nonjudgmental, and include them in planning the care.

I would want to find out what information the patient knows regarding her chronic medical conditions and how to manage them. I would discuss her diet and educate her on resources available to assist with meals that would provide healthier meal options than take-out restaurants. I would ensure she is educated on proper foley care, how to prevent UTIs, and early signs/symptoms of an UTI developing. I would educate the patient on breathing techniques to prevent pneumonia from being in bed and the importance of preventing pressure sore because they could be hard to heal with her medical history. To promote mental health, I would encourage the patient to sit outside for a little but every day if able to. I would want to make sure the patient feels she is safe at home alone and if not provide resources to help with alternative living arrangements. It is important that the patient knows how to properly take her medications as prescribed. I would ask the patient how she takes her medication and provide education as needed.

▶ Discuss the ethical issues this case presents.

An ethical issue in this case would be if it is safe for the patient to live at home alone upon discharge and possible neglect because she hasn't been able to care for herself due to her acute illness. She normally cannot cook for herself due to her chronic medical conditions and eats take-out food daily which is not healthy or beneficial for management of her comorbidities. With the recent illness she hasn't been getting out of bed and has been neglecting her self-care. The patient has limitations and her acute illness could possibly be the result of neglect or not managing her chronic conditions as needed.

▶ Discuss the legal issues this case presents.

Possible legal issues the case presents include if she is competent to make decisions for herself due to her symptoms of fatigue, weakness, and fever. If she isn't competent to make her own decisions then the POA would need to speak on her behalf, but if she is competent then her wishes must be respected. She may want to go home when she is discharged even though the POA may feel like she should go to a facility for assistance with her care. If the patient is competent then she has the right to go home when discharged even though she has limitations on her ability to care for herself. The POA could get the legal team involved to determine if she is competent enough to make her own decisions if her safety is in jeopardy.

▶ In what ways will you serve as an advocate for Margaret?

I would advocate for the patient by making sure her wishes are followed. If her safety is at risk then I would get legal, patient advocates, and/or social workers involved to determine what is best for her in the long term (example- determining if she is competent or if guardianship should be granted to her POA). I would assist the patient in finding alternatives to meals that would be healthier and compliant for a patient with diabetes and HTN rather than take-out food.

▶ What other departments would you involve in her care, and why?

- Dietician - to assist with meal planning for foods that are compliant with diabetes and HTN
- Case Manager – assist with discharge planning and home health services that may be needed if the patient goes home
- PT/OT – to assist the patient with regaining strength that she has lost from her illness and staying in bed for days
- Pharmacy – to help with medication management and proper administration
- Specialists – to provide direct care specialized to each medical diagnosis she has
- Home Health Services – to see if she qualifies for more services at home and their input on her safety returning home following discharge

Place your answers to these questions in the “Unit 1: Overview CC dropbox” by 1/7/2026 at 0800. Be prepared to share and discuss your thoughts in class.

In order to receive full credit (1 hour class time) for this assignment, it must be completed in its entirety by the due date/time assigned. Any assignments not completed in its entirety will result in missed class time and must be completed by the end of the semester to pass the course.