

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?

As the critical care nurse caring for Margaret, I would have multiple concerns. My main concern would be the possibility of infection or sepsis. She came in with a fever, weakness, and fatigue, and she has a chronic Foley catheter. This would put her at high risk for a urinary tract infection. Her history of diabetes also increases her risk for infection and poor healing. I am also concerned about how weak she has become since she reports not getting out of bed for several days. Her not getting out of bed increases chances of skin breakdown, decreased mobility, and blood clots. Another concern is with her medication safety because she does not know her home medication doses and did not bring them with her. Also, her lack of family support and social isolation is concerning and could make discharge planning more complicated.

- ▶ 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.

When communicating with Margaret, I would make sure to be clear, calm, and patient. Being in this setting can be overwhelming for the patients with all the equipment, alarms, and unfamiliar routines. I would communicate regularly with the POA, with Margaret's permission. I would make sure to update them on her condition, test results, and overall plan of care. It would be important to discuss her current illness, goals, and possible outcomes. Making sure everyone is on the same page early can help prevent confusion later.

- ▶ Discuss the ethical issues this case presents.

One of the main issues or ethical concerns, in this case, is the issue of autonomy. Margaret has the right to make decisions about her care, but if her condition worsens or she becomes confused, her power of attorney may need to make decisions for her. Another ethical issue is beneficence, As the healthcare team must act in ways that are in her best interest while balancing what she wants for herself.

- ▶ Discuss the legal issues this case presents.

Legal issues this case presents are that her health care power of attorney must be verified and documented to make sure decisions are made legally and appropriately. Accurate documentation is important, such as assessments, communication with the power of attorney, and medication reconciliation. HIPAA must also be followed to protect her privacy when sharing information with her power of attorney or other team members.

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

I would advocate for Margaret by making sure her needs are addressed and her voice is heard. This includes closely monitoring her condition, reporting changes immediately, and making sure she receives timely treatment. I would also advocate for her comfort and safety, especially since she is physically weak and dependent on others. I would also advocate for Margaret by helping her with discharge planning. Because she lives alone and has limited support, I would make sure that the appropriate services are arranged before discharge.

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

Margaret would benefit from multiple departments being involved in her care. Social work and case management should be involved to help with discharge planning and assess her home situation. A dietitian should be consulted due to her diabetes and reliance on takeout meals. Physical and occupational therapy would be important to assess her strength, mobility, and safety needs. Pharmacy could assist with medication reconciliation since her home medication doses are unknown. Home health services may also need to be contacted to support her after 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.

