

### Altered Mental Status



#### Definition:

Acute change in alertness, consciousness, or cognitive function.

#### Start

- 1. Establish team leader and call for HELP.**
- 2. Check pulse and vital signs.**
  - If pulseless, initiate Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support
- 3. Check glucose via finger stick.**
- 4. Obtain intravenous (IV) access.**
- 5. Perform focused physical exam.**
  - Pupils (Pinpoint? See opiate overdose treatment box.)
  - Detailed neurologic exam
  - IV infusions?
- 6. Perform focused history.**
  - AMPLE: allergies, medications, past medical history, last meal, recent events
  - Consider sending senior member for electronic chart review
- 7. Consider further diagnostic testing.**
  - Blood: arterial blood gas, lactate, complete blood count, basic metabolic panel, liver function tests, coagulation, ammonia
  - Computed tomography: head without contrast
  - Infection evaluation: urinalysis, cultures, chest radiograph, lumbar puncture
  - Electrocardiogram



#### Hypoglycemia Treatment

- 1. 1 ampule (50 mL) of 50% glucose**
- 2. If no IV access, 1 mg of intramuscular glucagon**
- 3. Consider 10% dextrose infusion**



#### Opiate Overdose Treatment

**Definition:** Recent opiate administration with altered mental status and either pinpoint pupils or respiratory rate < 12 breaths/min

- 1. Administer supplemental oxygen if O<sub>2</sub> saturation < 90%**
- 2. Perform bag-mask ventilation if apnea or or respiratory rate < 12 breaths/min**
- 3. Dilute 0.4 mg of naloxone in 10 mL normal saline**
- 4. Administer 1 mL (0.04 mg)**
- 5. Repeat naloxone doses until respiratory rate > 12 breaths/min, up to 5 mg total**
- 6. Titrate dose to respiratory status (not mental status)**



#### Life-Threatening Diagnoses

- **Hypoglycemia**
- **Sepsis/Infection**
- **Stroke**
- **Head trauma: intracranial, subarachnoid, subdural, epidural hematoma**
- **Seizures: consider nonconvulsive status epilepticus**
- **Respiratory failure**
- **Severe alcohol or benzodiazepine withdrawal**
- **Hypertensive encephalopathy**
- **Toxic ingestion/medications**
- **Serotonin syndrome or neuroleptic malignant syndrome**