

Activity 3 Making complex and difficult decisions

Activity instructions for ambassadors

Background

In all roles of nursing and midwifery, staff work as part of a team to make important and complex decisions. For example, a research nurse must screen patients for their eligibility to enter into a clinical trial.

This group activity demonstrates the complex decisions a research nurse would be involved in making, often when patients are critically ill.

The challenge

This activity is designed around a fictitious new drug, DrugX, which can help patients with respiratory conditions. The drug can only be given to patients who fit a certain set of criteria. Students need to identify which of the three patients would be eligible to enter a trial for the drug.

What you will need

- A printout of the activity sheet (DrugX clinical trial criteria and patient profiles)
- A pen for each group
- A copy of the answers and discussion points

Instructions

- Split the class into groups of 2–3 students
- Give each group an activity sheet
- Talk students through the physiological observations, explaining what the different observations mean
- Ask students to review the DrugX clinical trial criteria against the three patient profiles to identify which patient should be selected (guide time of 10 minutes)
- Once the designated time limit is reached, go through the answers and move on to the discussion points below

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Answers

Patient B is eligible; the highlighted boxes show why the other patients were ineligible.

Physiological observation	Patient A	Patient B	Patient C
Gender	Female	Female	Female
Red blood cell count	5.6	5.1	3.8
White blood cell count	6.2	5.9	10.0
Respiratory test	Fail	Fail	Fail
Have they had cancer before?	No	No	Yes
Electrocardiogram (ECG)	Normal	Normal	Not normal
Diabetes	No	Type II	No
Age	18	72	32
Pre-existing allergies	Yes – to silver	No	No
Pregnant?	No	No	No
Resting blood pressure	Systolic = 150	Systolic = 125	Systolic = 133
	Diastolic = 80	Diastolic = 86	Diastolic = 70

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Discussion points

After the students have finished, use the opportunity to talk about the activity and how it relates to nursing and midwifery. Some areas of discussion could include:

- What have students learnt from this activity? What does it tell them about a nurse or midwife's job?
- Would they find making this decision difficult? If so, why?
- Can they think of other examples of when a nurse or midwife would need to make difficult decisions?
- The role of a research nurse is diverse. What other things do they think a research nurse would do? For example:
 - Play a vital role in ensuring clinical research studies run smoothly and that participants are safe and fully informed
 - Work with each suitable patient's doctor to provide information to help them decide if they want to take part
 - Support the patient through the decision-making process and if the patient agrees to participate, obtain written consent and enrol them into the trial
 - Arrange the patient's assessments, including treatment, x-rays or scans, taking blood samples, carrying out follow-up visits, collecting all the required data and monitoring their safety and wellbeing
- Which areas of their work might research nurses find particularly rewarding?
