

NOT A REAL MRCP EXAMINATION STIMULUS

**LAW AND MEDICINE TEACHING MATERIAL  
MRCP(UK) PACES****Station 4: COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ETHICS**

**Your role:** You are junior doctor in general medical team seeing the patient as a follow-up appointment

**Problem:** Altered liver function tests and itching

**Patient:** Mr Andy Fry, a 32 year-old man

Please read the scenario below. When the bell sounds, enter the examination room to begin the consultation. *Please remember to take this instruction sheet into the examination room with you.*

**Scenario:**

You are about to see Andy Fry, who has a partner who is also your patient. He originally was admitted with a suspected PE, but the investigations were all normal and he was discharged. His presenting symptoms were very mild shortness of breath and itching (but no jaundice). However, his admission bloods revealed mildly elevated bilirubin and transaminases. Results from a hepatic screen have come back and they reveal the following,

Hepatitis B surface antibody (anti-HBs) positive

Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg) positive

Hepatitis B e-antigen (HBeAg) positive

HBV DNA positive

Anti-hepatitis B core antigen antibody, pending

The remainder of the hepatic screen is negative.

You are a doctor on the general medical clinical team in outpatients' clinic. You happen to know that his partner has never been tested for hepatitis B.

**Your task** is to discuss the diagnosis and its implications with Mr. Fry.

*Continued on next page...*

**LAW AND MEDICINE TEACHING MATERIAL**

You have 14 minutes to communicate with the surrogate followed by 1 minute for reflection before 5 minutes of discussion with the examiners.

Your examiners will warn you when 12 minutes have elapsed.

Do not take the history again except for details that will help in your discussion. You may make notes if you wish on the paper provided, but do not make any marks on these instructions.

*Any notes you make must be handed to the examiners at the end of the station. You are not required to examine the patient/relative.*

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**LAW AND MEDICINE TEACHING MATERIAL  
MRCP(UK) PACES****Station 4: COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ETHICS****Your role:** You are the patient, Mr Andy Fry, a 32-year old man**Problem:** Discussing the diagnosis and its implications.**Scenario:**

You were short of breath one night at work, in your night club. You thought nothing of it, but your partner Sam who runs the bar thought that you had better 'get checked out' by A&E. He waited with you for a hours, and eventually you were admitted for investigation of a blood clot in the lung. This turned out to be negative. You also mentioned to the junior doctor that you had developed some itching in your wrist. In fact, you have a known nickel allergy. The doctor told you that she would run some 'liver tests' on the safe side.

In fact, you are a needle user and have been for several years. You had some tattoos which have now been surgically erased. You fell ill while in Tanzania several years' ago, for which you received 2 pints of blood. You live alone with your partner in a small bed-sit (you share a bed as well), who is homosexual. You 'do everything' with him, including sharing toothbrushes. You are not aware that he has any medical problems, but you do know that he is the patient of the same doctor you are seeing now.

You have experienced no medical problems in the past. For example, you have never turned yellow, nor experienced any generalized itching. You drink alcohol moderately, about the equivalent of 5 pints of medium-strength lager. You spoke about 7 packs of cigarettes a week. You regularly use cocaine recreatively, but not other drugs. You do not have any known drug allergies. You have no known drug allegies.

You are mainly concerned about your general health, and what the results could mean for the life insurance that you have taken out recently. You believe that your general health is quite good otherwise.

**Attitudes and emotional responses**

You are quite angry about having made to wait in A&E for so long, when you think that with hindsight you could have been discharged instantaneously. You are very angry however about why so many tests were done, and also concerned about what they reveal. You are very worried about the future.

Questions you might ask include:

- What caused my itching?
- Why were my liver tests done?
- Do you have an overall diagnosis?
- Do I have to tell my partner, or will you?
- Is it safe to share my toothbrush with Sam?

**LAW AND MEDICINE  
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DATE	CYCLE

**Station 4: COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ETHICS**

Examiners should advise candidates when there are 2 minutes remaining (ie after 12 minutes). If the candidate appears to have finished early, remind them how long is left at the station and enquire if there is anything else they would like to ask, or whether they have finished. If they have finished, please remain silent and allow the candidate that time for reflection. The surrogate should remain until the end of the 14-minute period.

A good candidate would be expected to have agreed a summary and plan of action with the subject before closure. Nonetheless, in discussion, the examiners will usually ask the candidate (after one minute's reflection) to summarise the problems raised in the foregoing exchange.

The candidate should be asked to identify the ethical and/or legal issues raised in this case and how they would address them. The framework for discussion should include consideration of these four underlying principles:

- Respect for the patient's autonomy
- Duty to do good and not to do harm
- Duty to act just
- Legal aspects (a detailed knowledge of medical law is *not* required).

Candidates are *not* expected to have a detailed knowledge of medical jurisprudence. For overseas candidates in the UK, detailed knowledge of UK law is not required, although candidates should be aware of general legal and ethical principles that may affect the case in question.

**The candidate should recognise his/her limit in dealing with a problem and know when, and from where, to seek further advice and support.**

**Problem:** A person investigated for altered LFTs and itching

**Candidate's role:** The doctor looking after the patient.

**Surrogate's role:** The patient, Mr Andy Fry, a 32-year old night club owner.

The examiner should refer to the marking guidelines in three domains on the marksheet and to the anchor statements. The examiners are invited to explore the communication skills of the candidate with reference to the specific issues raised by the scenario below. Both examiners should consider these, and any others they feel appropriate, and agree the issues that a candidate should address to achieve a Pass and a Clear Pass. The examiners should also agree the criteria for Fail and Clear Fail.

The candidate should:

- Explain what the LFTs mean in plain language.
- Discuss what their significance.
- Explore the patient's personal beliefs, concerns and expectations.
- Consider how best to proceed.

Point(s) of ethical interest:

- beneficence
- autonomy
- non-malificence
- consent
- confidentiality
- justice