

Pain Management Situational Quiz

M4-1. Neuropathic pain is:

- a. usually treated with anti-inflammatory agents
- b. a result of disordered nerve function
- c. due to direct stimulation of intact nociceptors
- d. rarely responsive to opioid analgesics

Answer: b

This question concerns understanding pain pathophysiology. Neuropathic pain is a result of disordered nerve function. It does not result from inflammatory processes and does not relate to ongoing stimulation of intact nociceptors. Opioids are effective in managing neuropathic pain. However, relief is usually incomplete without the addition of adjuvant or coanalgesics.

M4-2. Mrs Martinez is a 42-year-old woman who has breast cancer metastatic to bone and liver. Her pain has been well controlled on sustained-release morphine, 120 mg po bid, for 3 months. Which of the following is most likely to occur as a result of this treatment?

- a. psychological dependence
- b. physical dependence
- c. pharmacologic tolerance
- d. respiratory depression

Answer: b

This question is aimed at understanding pharmacology of opioids. Physical dependence (the appearance of a withdrawal syndrome if the drug is stopped suddenly) should be expected. Now that she is on a stable dose, the dose is unlikely to need to be escalated unless her disease worsens. Progressive pharmacologic tolerance is unlikely. There is no evidence that opioids cause psychological dependence. Respiratory depression in an otherwise well woman should be expected.

M4-3. Mr Martin has locally advanced transitional cell cancer of the bladder with chronic pelvic and abdominal pain. Which of the following is most important in determining the maximum dose of oral morphine during dose titration?

- a. pain relief
- b. respiratory depression
- c. risk of overstepping regulatory limits
- d. strength of pill

Answer: a

This question is aimed at understanding pharmacology of opioids. There is no upper limit to pure agonist opioid analgesics. The dose is limited by side effects. Respiratory depression is exceedingly uncommon when doses are titrated to pain relief. There are no a priori limits to morphine dose escalation. Pill strength is not an issue —patients may need to take many pills to achieve the desired dose.

M4-4. Pharmacologic tolerance develops to all of the following side effects of opioid analgesics *except*:

- a. constipation
- b. nausea
- c. respiratory depression
- d. sedation

Answer: a

This question is aimed at understanding adverse effects of opioids. Constipation is nearly universal and does not get better with repeated dosing. Pharmacological tolerance develops within days to weeks to the common adverse effects such as nausea and sedation, as well as to the uncommon effect of respiratory depression.