

New Station 5

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- You will be asked to see two patients at this station. The clinical information about one of these patients is given in the box below. You should have a second sheet giving you information about the other patient.
- You have 10 minutes with each patient. The examiners will alert you when 6 minutes have elapsed and will stop you after 8 minutes.
- In the remaining 2 minutes, one examiner will ask you to report abnormal physical signs (if any), your diagnosis or differential diagnosis, and your plan for management (if not already clear from your discussion with the patient).

Your role: You are the medical doctor on call.

Patient name: Mrs Jane Smith – age 33 years

This lady was admitted to the orthopaedic ward for a carpal tunnel release operation.

She mentioned to the orthopaedic doctors that she has swelling in her neck and they have asked for the opinion of a physician. You were asked by your consultant to see the patient and to assess the suspected swelling in her neck.

Your task is to assess the patient's problems and address any questions or concerns raised by the patient.

- You should assess the problem by means of a relevant clinical history and a relevant physical examination. You do not need to complete the history before carrying out appropriate examination.
- You should respond to any questions the patient may have, advise the patient of your probable diagnosis (or differential diagnoses) and your plan for investigation and treatment where appropriate.
- You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

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INFORMATION FOR PATIENT

The doctors sitting the examination have been asked to assess your problem. They will have 8 minutes to ask you about the problem and any other relevant issues. They will also examine you. They should explain to you what they think is wrong and what action should be taken and answer any questions you have, for example about the diagnosis, tests that may be needed, or treatment. One of the examiners will ask them to describe any abnormal examination findings and give their diagnosis.

Your history is described below.

You are: Mrs Jane Smith – age 33 years

Your problem: swelling in your neck

You are in the orthopaedic ward and you mentioned to the admitting doctor that your neck seemed swollen. One of the medical doctors has been asked to see you about this.

You have been suffering from pain in your right forearm and a numb or tingly feeling in your right hand – affecting your 3rd, 4th, and 5th fingers. The aching in your arm is worse at night and you have found it more and more difficult to get comfortable. The problem has been present for several years and was worse when you were pregnant with your daughter 3 years ago but improved for a time after that.

A trapped nerve in the wrist has been diagnosed. You are having a short admission to have the nerve released.

You mentioned that you thought your neck was swollen when the admitting doctor was examining you. You have not mentioned this to a doctor before but your sister has been commenting on it for a few years. Your sister is 38 and has an underactive thyroid.

You do not have any of the symptoms your sister had when her thyroid was underactive. Indeed you feel well. Your weight is stable. Your skin and hair are normal. You do not seem to feel the heat or the cold any more than anyone else. Your bowel works normally. You do not have any problem with swallowing.

You should ask why your neck seems swollen and whether there is something wrong with your thyroid gland. You should ask if any tests are required and, if so, what these tests will be.

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INFORMATION FOR EXAMINERS

Patient: Mrs Jane Smith – age 33 years

Examiners should discuss and agree the criteria for pass and for fail in the competencies being assessed.

As a general guide, candidates would be expected to

- Note the history of neck swelling and the family history of thyroid disease.
- Enquire about symptoms of disturbed thyroid function.
- Examine the neck and identify the smooth and symmetrical thyroid enlargement. Note absence of bruit.
- Examine for signs of overactive and underactive thyroid gland and confirm clinical euthyroid state.
- Confirm to the patient that her thyroid gland does seem enlarged but reassure that the gland seems to be working normally judging from clinical examination. Advise on appropriate further investigations.

The lead examiner should:

- a) Advise the candidate after 6 minutes have elapsed that “You have two minutes remaining with your patient”
- b) Ask the candidate to describe any abnormal physical findings that have been identified
- c) Ask the candidate to give the preferred diagnosis and any differential diagnosis that is being considered
- d) Any remaining areas of uncertainty eg regarding the plan for investigation or management of the problem may be addressed in any time that remains.