
Critical Thinking Exercise – EMT

Situation: You are a firefighter EMT called to the scene of a local bar at 1:30 a.m. for a person who slipped from the bar stool and is unresponsive. When you arrive, people are crowded around him and the owner/bartender says, “He’s just drunk. You don’t have to examine him. Just get him out of here and take him to the hospital. It’s bad for business.” As your partner explains to the owner that you must examine him and then moves the crowd to the other side of the room, you hear another radio call about a hit and run motor vehicle accident with four victims (a couple and two young children) a block away.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your first priority in this situation?
2. What assumptions did you make on your way to the first call? Do these assumptions help or hinder you in decision making about the call? In what way?
3. What are the possible causes of the patient’s lack of responsiveness?
4. What preliminary conclusions did you form? In what way will does forming preliminary conclusions help or hinder you in decision making about the call? What is the next step after forming preliminary conclusions?
5. What impact will the second call have on your assessment of the first patient?
6. Discuss your feelings about being assigned to the first call when an apparent more important call is just a block away.
7. What biases (if any) are apparent in your thinking?
8. What attitudes influenced your thinking or decision making in this situation?

Instructor's Guide-Critical Thinking Exercise – EMT

Situation: You are a firefighter EMT called to the scene of a local bar at 1:30 a.m. for a person who slipped from the bar stool and is unresponsive. When you arrive, people are crowded around him and the owner/bartender says, “He’s just drunk. You don’t have to examine him. Just get him out of here and take him to the hospital. It’s bad for business.” As your partner explains to the owner that you must examine him and then moves the crowd to the other side of the room, you hear another radio call about a hit and run motor vehicle accident with 4 victims (a couple and 2 young children) a block away.

Discussion Questions

1. What is your first priority in this situation?
 - *Assessment and appropriate care of the patient you were called to see.*
2. What assumptions did you make on your way to the first call? Do these assumptions help or hinder you in decision making about the call? In what way?
 - *No incorrect answer in this question. Asking for students to share assumptions.*
 - *Most students will assume from the scene of a bar that the patient is drunk*
 - *This assumption, if it forms the basis for action, will hinder the EMT from performing a full assessment*
3. What are the possible causes of the patient’s lack of responsiveness?
 - *Alcohol intoxication*
 - *Stroke*
 - *Heart Attack*
 - *Diabetic Emergency*
 - *Head injury*
4. What preliminary conclusions did you form? In what way will does forming preliminary conclusions help or hinder you in decision making about the call? What is the next step after forming preliminary conclusions?
 - *The preliminary conclusions probably involved alcohol intoxication.*
 - *Forming this conclusion as a preliminary will help you in decision making in that it helps to focus the call initially.*
 - *The next step after forming the preliminary conclusion is to assess the patient to either validate the preliminary conclusion or rule it out.*
 - *It is necessary to consider all of the other possibilities in the assessment and to act accordingly.*
5. What impact will the second call have on your assessment of the first patient?
 - *The second call will very likely have a psychological impact, but should not affect your assessment of the first patient*
 - *Once you have answered the call, you have formed a relationship with the patient and you cannot legally abandon the patient..*
6. Discuss your feelings about being assigned to the first call when an apparent more important call is just a block away.
 - *No incorrect answers to this point.*
 - *Facilitate open dialogue and safety in the discussion of feelings.*

The next two points have no correct answers. Facilitators should create a safe, non-judgmental climate for discussion of biases and attitudes. Many biases and attitudes exist in all populations regarding alcohol use and misuse.

7. What biases (if any) are apparent in your thinking?
8. What attitudes influenced your thinking or decision making in this situation?