

Medical Presentations & Complications of Substance Use

CSAM Addiction Medicine Board Review Course

August 24, 2022

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Presentation updated from 2021 Triveni DeFries, MD MPH



CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

I, Zachary Zwolak, DO, have nothing to disclose, and I will not be discussing “off label” use of drugs or devices in this presentation.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

After attending this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Recognize medical presentations of substance use including toxidromes and withdrawal syndromes.
2. Diagnose and manage several common medical complications of substance use.
3. Target screening for infectious complications of substance use for highest risk patients including sexual and gender minorities.

Poll:

What is your training in?

FM

IM

Psych

OB/GYN

Students

Other?

Need To Know

1. Toxidromes (clinical symptoms & management)
2. Withdrawal syndromes (clinical symptoms & management)
3. Acid-Base disorders and electrolyte disturbances
4. Cardiovascular morbidity: ischemia, arrhythmia
5. Pulmonary morbidity: COPD, cancer
6. GI morbidity: hepatitis and cirrhosis
7. Infectious disease morbidity: Endocarditis, soft tissue infections, hepatitis, HIV, sexually transmitted infections
8. Common drug interaction concerns: serotonin syndrome, cytochrome P-450 enzyme inducer/inhibitors

Question 1

A 32 year-old man with no significant medical history presents to the emergency room. He has a runny nose, complains of diffuse myalgia, has 5 mm pupils bilaterally, and states that he has had no injection drug use in 2 days because of about 10 days of malaise and fatigue. His girlfriend told him his eyes were starting to look yellow. On exam, his temperature is 38.0°C (100.4°F), HR 97, BP 128/70, and RR 14/min. He has mild scleral icterus, scattered non-tender firm nodules in the muscles of bilateral arms and legs, and hepatomegaly, but no splenomegaly, asterixis, or ascites.

Question 1 (cont.)

Blood chemistry shows:

Total bilirubin 4.4 mg/dL

AST 580

ALT 750

Alk phos 145

Albumin 4.2

INR 1.3

Urine drug screen: THC positive,
otherwise negative

Ultrasonography shows:

Hepatomegaly and diffusely decreased
echotexture

Viral testing:

HIV ELISA antibody negative

HIV p24 antigen

HIV viral load negative

Hep B surface antigen negative

Hep B surface antibody negative

Hep B core IgM negative

Hepatitis C antibody negative

Hepatitis A IgG and IgM negative

Question 1 (cont.)

Which test is the most appropriate next step in this patient's evaluation?

- A. MRI abdomen
- B. Liver biopsy
- C. Ethyl glucoronide urine testing
- D. Hepatitis C virus RNA

1. Answer D) **Hepatitis C virus RNA**

- In possible acute hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection, the most sensitive diagnostic test is measurement of HCV RNA. If positive, this suggests active infection.
- The patient has signs of an acute hepatitis, which include moderately elevated liver tests, jaundice, nausea, dark urine, fatigue, malaise, fever, chills that develop 2-12 weeks since exposure.
- The patient has possible exposure through injection drug use. The *incidence of HCV is approximately 20% for each year of injection drug use*, and a review estimated overall hepatitis C prevalence of about *53% among people who inject drugs* in the US.
- *Acute hepatitis C virus may remain seronegative for longer than 8 weeks. So, in cases of high risk, testing HCV RNA is appropriate.* Only about 20% of new hepatitis C infections are acutely symptomatic, which contributes to fact that many cases go undetected without routine testing.

1. Answer D) **Hepatitis C virus RNA**

- Update: As of 2020, CDC now recommends universal hepatitis C screening for all U.S. adults and all pregnant women during every pregnancy.
- Injection drug use accounts for the *majority of new HCV infections* (70%), and is a driving force behind this recommendation since testing with *linkage to antiviral treatment* has the potential to decrease HCV infections
- Needle-related infections can also include skin and soft tissue infections, bloodstream and endovascular infections, epidural abscess, spinal osteomyelitis, transmission of viruses (HIV, HBV, HCV – consider prevention with *HIV PREP/PEP* and HBV & HAV vaccination)

1. Answer D) **Hepatitis C virus RNA**

- **Liver biopsy** may show histopathological features, including steatosis, lymphoid aggregates, and bile duct damage. However, these findings are not specific for HCV and similar findings are associated with several forms of acute hepatitis.
- **MRI of the liver** will detail hepatic morphology but will not contribute any more to the diagnosis than the ultrasonography.
- Alcohol can cause acute hepatitis, though this case does not suggest its role. **Ethyl glucuronide (EtG)** is a metabolite of alcohol that can be tested in urine or hair, but is generally not used in this clinical setting.

Question 2

45 year old male is found to have positive HCV antibodies and high HCV RNA viral load suggesting active, chronic HCV infection. He has alcohol use disorder and is interested in treatment with direct-acting antiviral therapy. **Which of the following is true regarding treatment of HCV in patients with ongoing substance use?**

- A. Alcohol is not a contraindication to starting antiviral therapy
- B. Alcohol does not affect liver health in people with HCV
- C. There is no benefit to treating HCV in people who inject drugs
- D. People cannot start medications for opioid use disorder prior to treatment for HCV

2. Answer A. **Alcohol is not a contraindication to starting antiviral therapy**

- *60-75% of patients infected with hepatitis C will fail to clear the virus and go on to develop chronic HCV, and 16% of those will develop cirrhosis*
- **Alcohol use is not a contraindication** to starting antiviral therapy. Treatment success rates appear equivalent to patients who do not drink alcohol.
- Alcohol is associated with increased hepatitis C viral load, progression of liver fibrosis and risk of developing hepatocellular carcinoma
- *HCV treatment should be offered to patients engaging in injection drug use.* High cure rates have been achieved regardless of active use of drugs or medications for opioid use disorder

Question 3

A 25 year-old woman comes to clinic. Six months ago, she had an episode of syncope and was hospitalized and given a new diagnosis of Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy (HOCM). One week after hospitalization, she failed her bar exam to practice law in California, and has been struggling with depressed mood, insomnia, and anxiety ever since.

CURES (PDMP) report reveals monthly refills of lorazepam 1 mg, which she states she takes only once or twice a week on the weekends (4-6 tabs at a time). Since her HOCM diagnosis, she has also been drinking 1 glass of alcohol daily during the week/4-6 drinks daily on the weekends and using marijuana every evening (previously only occasionally). She states that her biggest source of anxiety is concern over her heart condition.

Question 3 (cont.)

In counseling this patient, which potential complication of her substance use would you consider the most immediately likely and most concerning?

- A. Myocardial infarction
- B. Endocarditis
- C. Atrial fibrillation
- D. Cerebrovascular accident

3. Answer C. Atrial fibrillation

- *Atrial fibrillation is the most common arrhythmia in adults and is associated with heavy alcohol use.*
- Occurs at some point in up to 60% of people with binge drinking (> 3 drinks at a time in women or > 4 drinks at a time in men). This most commonly presents during or after holidays or weekends when patients have consumed more than usual, earning the term “holiday heart.”
- Recent trial found atrial fibrillation burden lower in abstinence/reduced drinking group. *Alcohol use is a modifiable risk factor in management of atrial fibrillation.*

3. Answer C. Atrial fibrillation

- Patients with **hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy (or any heart disease)** are also at increased risk of atrial fibrillation which puts them at risk of worsening cardiomyopathy, outflow obstruction, and more malignant arrhythmias including ventricular fibrillation.
- Although there may be a slightly increased risk of endocarditis in HOCM patients, none of this patients' substance use patterns substantially increases that risk. You can review the *Duke Criteria* for endocarditis probability and diagnosis.
- Alcohol increases *cardiovascular risks* such as myocardial infarction and cerebrovascular accident, though less immediately likely since this risk develops with more chronic use.

Question 4

A 62 year old man is found down on the sidewalk and brought to your emergency department. Blood testing reveals a pH of 7.1 and an anion gap of 26, and an elevated serum osmolal gap. Creatinine is 3.2. Blood-alcohol level is 245 mg/dL. There are calcium oxalate crystals in his urine. He has a past history of suicide attempts.

What is your first step in treating this patient?

- A. Arrange dialysis first
- B. Wait for blood alcohol level to decrease and then proceed with dialysis
- C. Administer fomepizole first
- D. Give IV fluids and thiamine until anion gap closes.

4. Answer A. **Arrange dialysis first**

- Toxic alcohols (methanol, ethylene glycol, isopropyl alcohol) are occasionally ingested as a substitute for ethanol.
- They are metabolized by *alcohol dehydrogenase* and their metabolites can cause anion gap acidosis, osmolal gap and organ damage such as kidney failure.
- This patient has signs and symptoms consistent with ethylene glycol (antifreeze) toxicity, including **calcium oxalate crystals in the urine & osmole gap metabolic acidosis**.



4. Answer A. **Arrange dialysis first**

- Fomepizole is a treatment that **inhibits alcohol dehydrogenase and prevents metabolism of the ethylene glycol to its harmful metabolites.**
- However, if ethanol is co-ingested along with ethylene glycol, alcohol dehydrogenase will preferentially *metabolize ethanol first (historical treatment)*.
- *If serum alcohol concentration is sufficiently high (>100 mg/dL), then there is some time before fomepizole administration is necessary, since the alcohol dehydrogenase will first be occupied with ethanol metabolism. In this case, with a very elevated serum BAL, the first and **most important step is arranging hemodialysis** to remove ethylene glycol and its metabolites. Once these arrangements have been made, treatment with fomepizole could begin.*

Question 5

A 62 year old male patient is being treating for co-occurring chronic pain syndrome, opioid use disorder, and major depressive disorder. He also has atrial fibrillation and is on anticoagulation with warfarin. He mentions at a monthly follow-up appointment that his gums have been bleeding when he brushes his teeth. INR is checked, and results 3.9. Goal INR for atrial fibrillation is 2.0-3.0.

Which medication started last month is the most likely culprit for the supratherapeutic, elevated INR?

- A. Fluoxetine
- B. Naproxen
- C. Sertraline
- D. Buprenorphine-naloxone

5. Answer A) Fluoxetine

- Warfarin is metabolized by the *cytochrome P-450* isoenzyme system (mainly 2C9) in the liver. Many medications inhibit these isoenzymes, thereby prolonging the action of warfarin (as is the case for other medications, e.g. **methadone**) and increasing the patient's INR.

CYP450 inducers	Accelerate metabolism, decrease medication effect	Examples: rifampin, phenytoin, carbamazepine, phenobarbital, nevirapine, efavirenz
CYP450 inhibitors	Slow metabolism, increase medication effect	cimetidine, ciprofloxacin, fluconazole, erythromycin, fluvoxamine, fluoxetine

5. Answer A) Fluoxetine

- Among SSRI antidepressants, the two most potent inhibitors are fluoxetine (choice A) and fluvoxamine. The **two safest are citalopram and sertraline (choice C)**. SNRIs and TCAs have more limited impact and are likely safe with warfarin, provided that INR checks are instituted at the start of therapy.
- Although NSAIDs like naproxen (choice B) can increase bleeding risk through platelet inhibition and irritation of gastric mucosa, they do not affect INR.
- Buprenorphine-naloxone (choice D) is not known to affect warfarin metabolism and is primarily metabolized by CYP3A4 and 2C8

Question 6

A local hospitalist calls you for history about your 27 year old female patient who is being admitted and is too altered to provide much history. The patient has chronic epigastric pain, nausea, and vomiting. As her addiction medicine doctor, you have been working with her primary care physician to taper her medications. She has a history of club drug (i.e., MDMA, ketamine, GHB) use as well as sedative/hypnotic and opioid use disorders.

She has been taking tramadol for pain, duloxetine for pain and depression, metoclopramide and ondansetron for nausea, trazodone for insomnia. You had transitioned her from alprazolam to diazepam for taper.

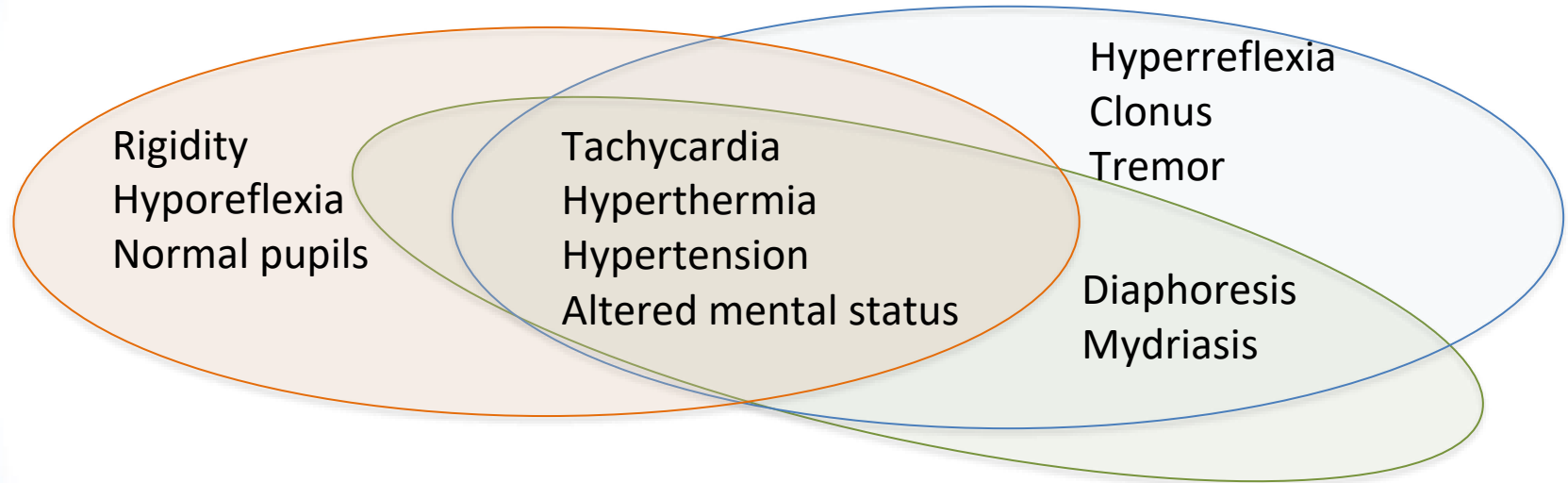
Question 6 (cont.)

She initially presented to the ER with tremor, diaphoresis, fever of 102°F, clonus in bilateral lower extremities, and agitation.

What do you suspect is the diagnosis, and how will you confirm it?

- A. Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome, by clinical presentation and CK level
- B. Serotonin syndrome, by clinical presentation
- C. MDMA (Ecstasy) intoxication, by urine drug testing
- D. Meningitis, by lumbar puncture

6. Answer C) Serotonin syndrome, by clinical presentation



6. Answer C) Serotonin syndrome, by clinical presentation

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome

Rigidity
Hyporeflexia
Normal pupils

Tachycardia
Hyperthermia
Hypertension
Altered mental status

6. Answer C) Serotonin syndrome, by clinical presentation

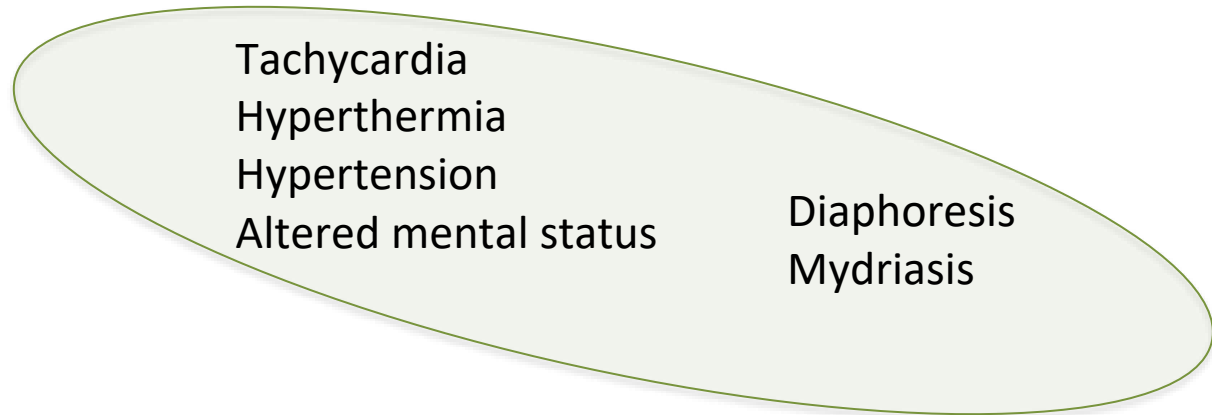
Serotonin Syndrome

Tachycardia
Hyperthermia
Hypertension
Altered mental status

Hyperreflexia
Clonus
Tremor

Diaphoresis
Mydriasis

6. Answer C) Serotonin syndrome, by clinical presentation

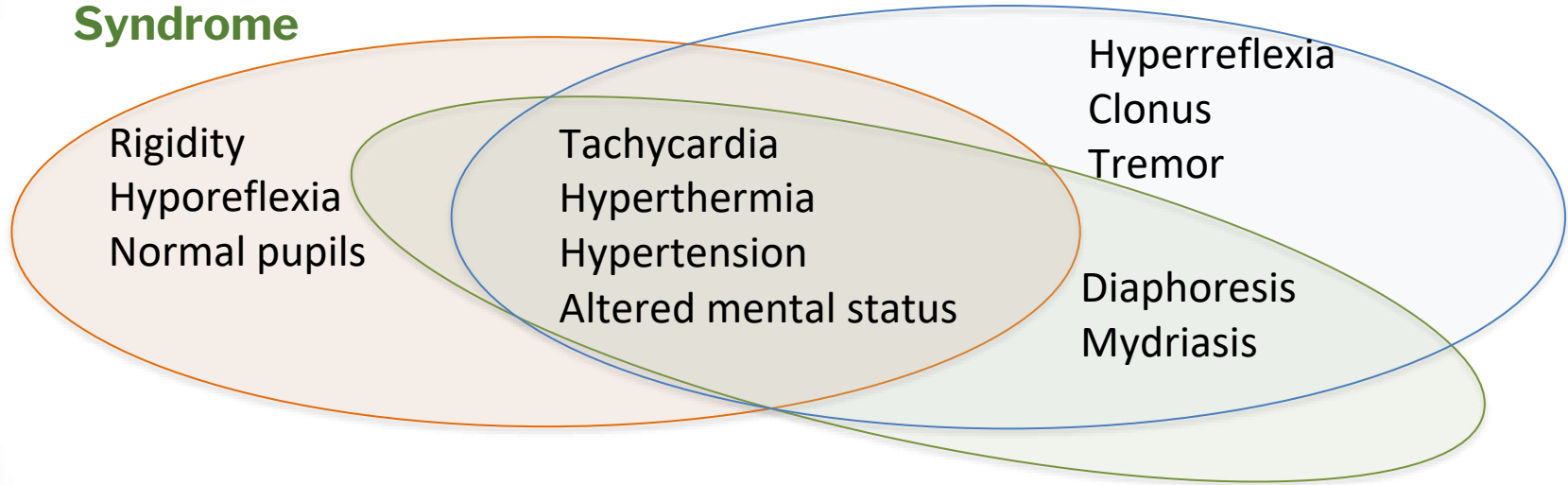


MDMA Intoxication

6. Answer C) Serotonin syndrome, by clinical presentation

Serotonin Syndrome

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome



MDMA Intoxication

Common combos to provoke SS

Duloxetine + Tramadol increase Tramadol

Duloxetine + Trazodone - increase Serotonin

Duloxetine + Ondansetron increase each other and Serotonin

Duloxetine + Metoclopramide increase Ser and can cause NMS EPS sx's

Also consider, trazodone or mirtazapine and other SSRI.

Question 7

A patient's acute alcohol withdrawal has resolved and she is now interested in a medication for alcohol use disorder. Most recent tests show AST 359, ALT 200, T bili 4.3, INR 1.7, Albumin 2.8 and moderate ascites. She has Child-Pugh class C cirrhosis. Which medication is the least appropriate?

- A. Acamprosate
- B. Topiramate
- C. Naltrexone
- D. Thiamine

7. Answer C) Naltrexone

With evidence of decompensated cirrhosis, Naltrexone is relatively contraindicated.

Table 2. Summary of Pharmacologic Treatment Recommendations for Patients with Alcohol-Use Disorder and Liver Disease.

Drug	Dosage	FDA-Approved for Treatment of Alcohol-Use Disorder*	Use in Patients with Liver Disease
Naltrexone	50 mg orally once a day or 380 mg intramuscularly monthly for ≥ 4 mo	Yes	Yes, but use with caution in patients with acute hepatitis and decompensated cirrhosis
Disulfiram	250–500 mg once a day for ≥ 3 mo	Yes	No
Acamprosate	666 mg three times a day†	Yes	Yes
Baclofen	10 mg three times a day; ≤ 80 mg once a day	No	Yes‡
Gabapentin	900–1800 mg once a day	No	Data are limited§
Ondansetron	1–16 μ g per kg of body weight twice a day	No	Data are limited¶
Topiramate	300 mg once a day	No	Data are limited
Varenicline	2 mg once a day	No	Data are limited

* FDA denotes Food and Drug Administration.

† In patients who weigh less than 60 kg, the recommended dose of acamprosate is 333 mg four times a day (two 333-mg pills with breakfast, one with lunch, and one with dinner).

‡ Studies of the efficacy of baclofen have had mixed results.

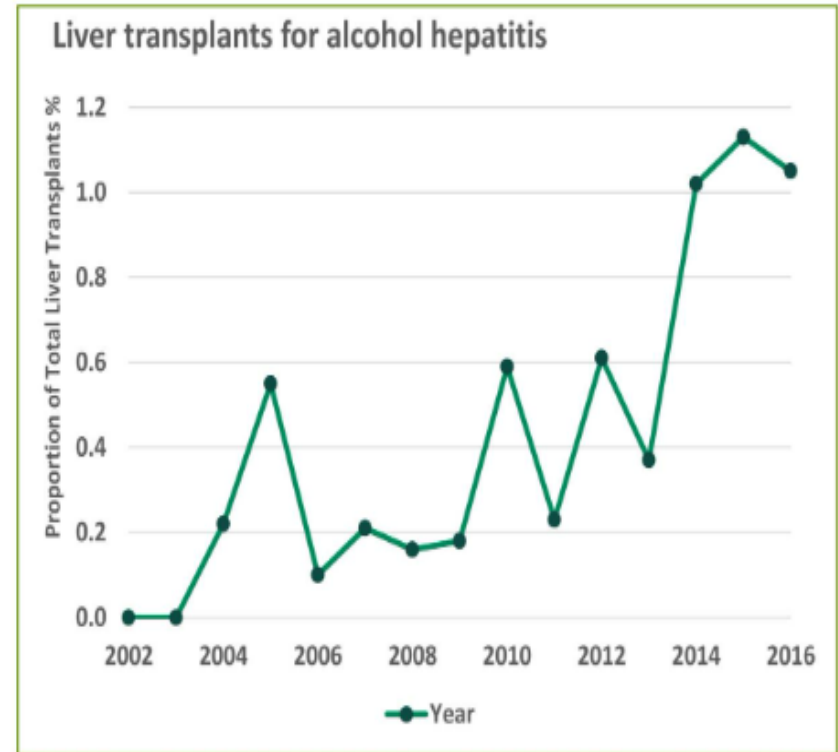
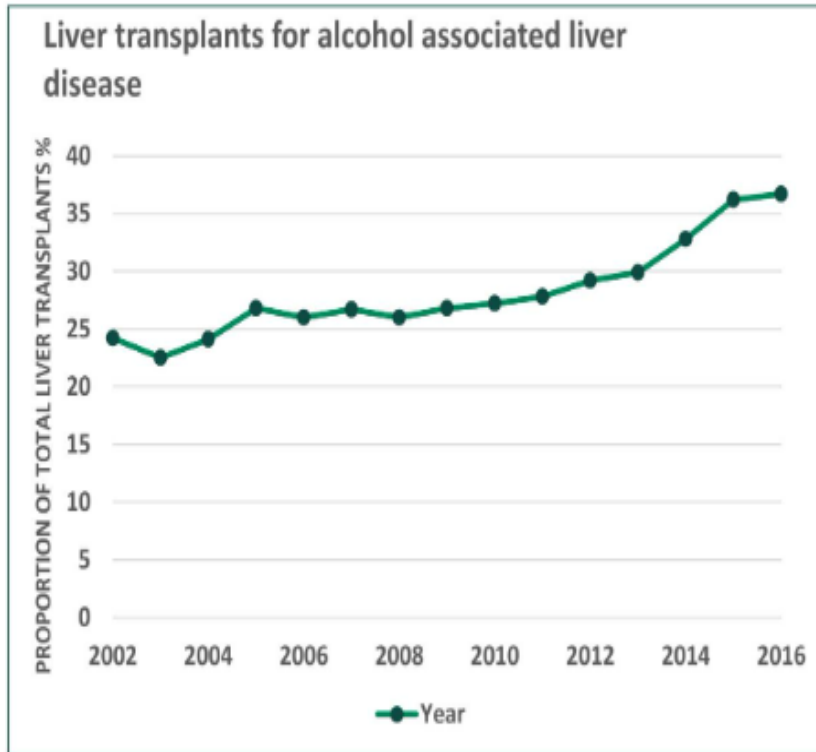
§ Gabapentin can be addictive.

¶ Liver toxicity has been reported with the use of ondansetron.

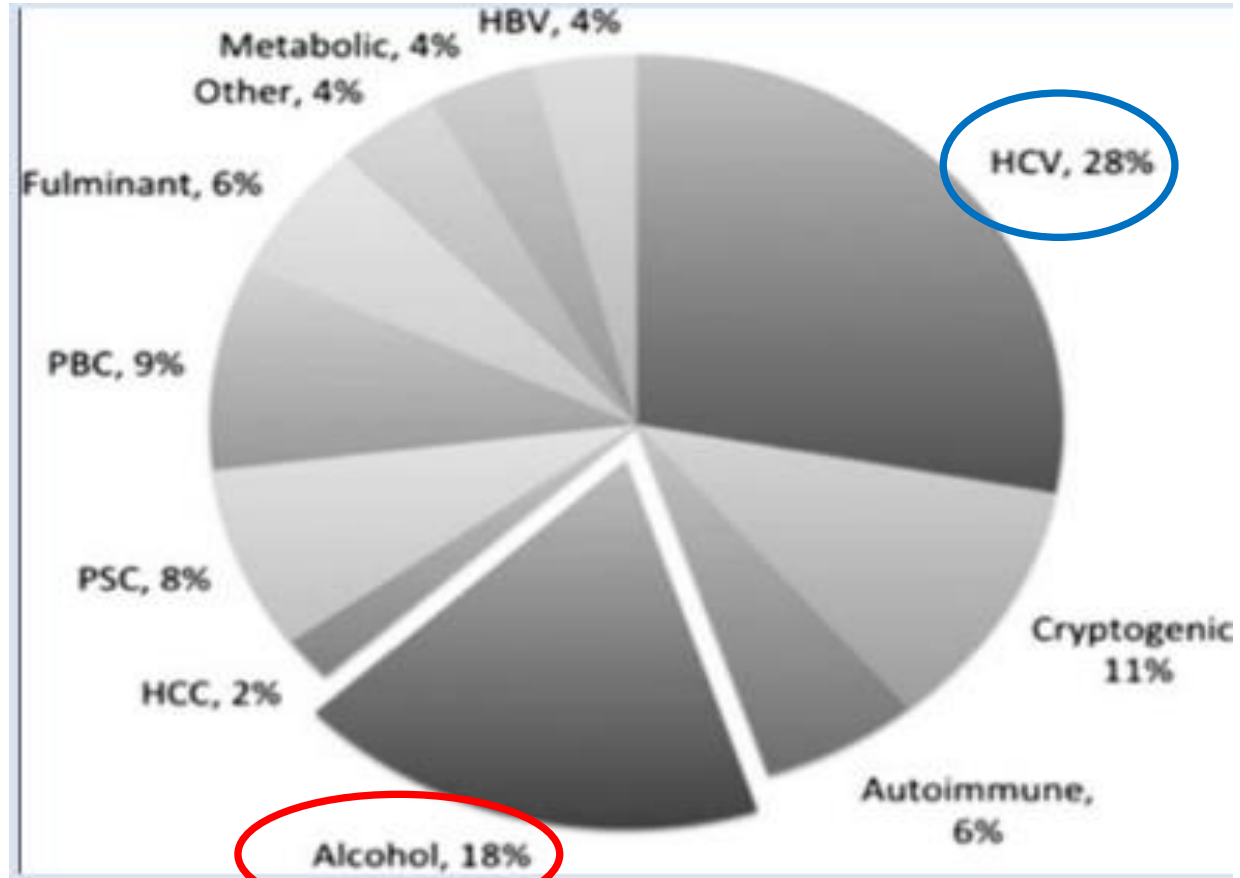
|| The side effects of topiramate may mimic the symptoms of hepatic encephalopathy.

D Fuster, JH Samet. N Engl J Med
2018;379:1251-1261

Alcohol-related liver disease is on the rise.



Alcohol-related cirrhosis is now the 2nd most common indication for liver transplantation in the US



Mellinger et al, 2018;
Lee et al, 2019

Question 8

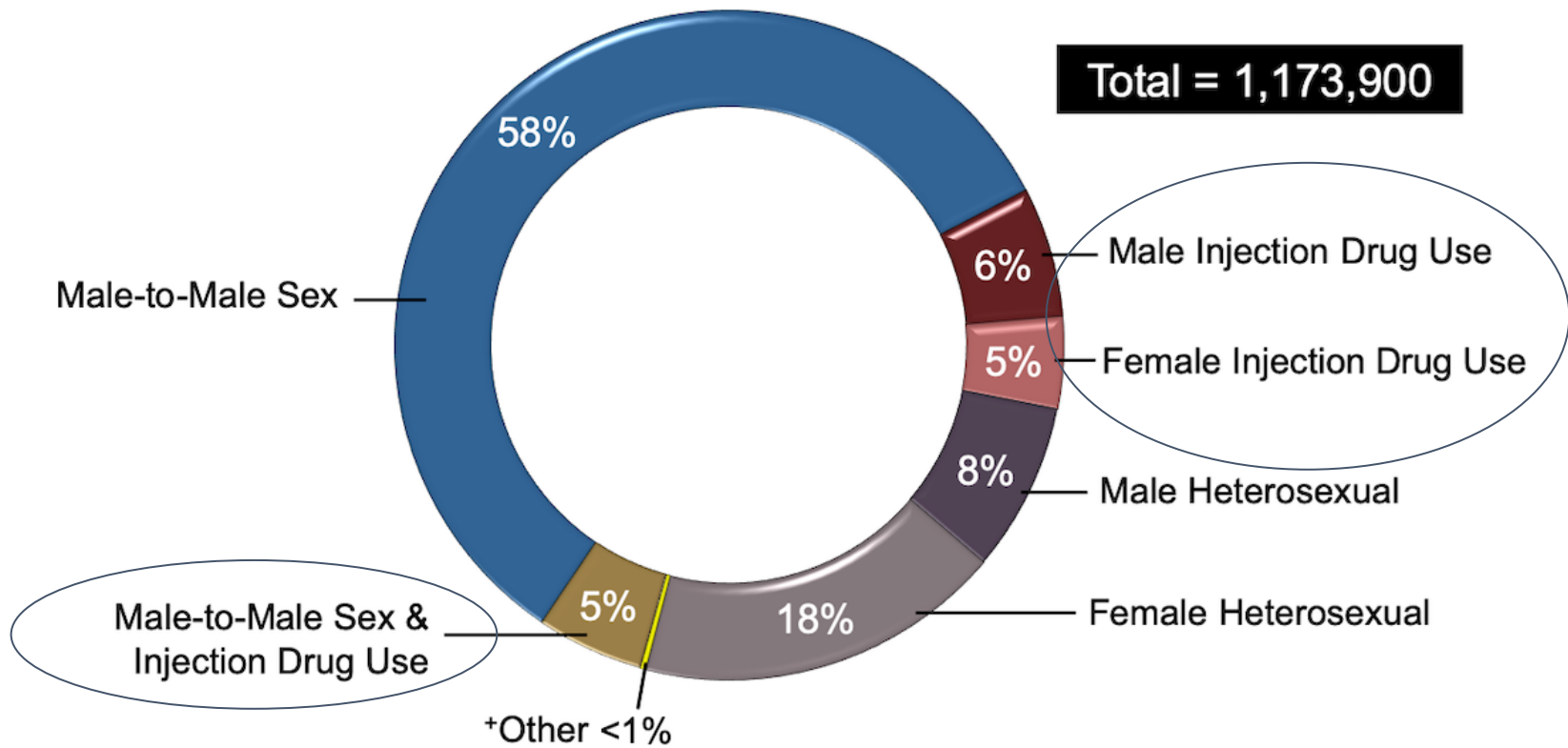
27 year old patient presents with a rash on the flank consistent with herpes zoster which has recurred for a second time this year. She identifies as transgender woman and attends a clinic specializing in gender-affirming care. While at the clinic, she asks the clinician on duty about medications to cut back on methamphetamine use.

The clinician orders testing for which of the following conditions:

- a) Diabetes
- b) HIV
- c) Psoriasis
- d) Skin allergies

8. Answer B) HIV

- Methamphetamine use may increase risky sexual behaviors that can lead to HIV transmission
- HIV seroconversion rates are high among sexual and gender minorities (in this case transgender woman assigned male at birth)
- Regularly test for HIV infection and offer pre- and post- exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)
- If high suspicion for acute infection, check HIV viral load.



*Other = perinatal, hemophilia, blood transfusion, and risk factor not reported or identified.

*Estimate for persons ≥ 13 years of age living with diagnosed or undiagnosed HIV infection

Figure 6 - Estimated Number of Persons Living with HIV in United States, by Transmission Category, 2018

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Estimated HIV Incidence and Prevalence in the United States, 2014–2018. HIV Surveillance Supplemental Report. 2020;25(No. 1):1-77. Published May 2020.

Question 9

37-year-old male visits a primary care clinic affiliated with an outpatient opioid treatment program. He reports a painless ulcer on his penis. Which test is most appropriate?

- A. PPD Skin Testing
- B. Interferon gamma release assay testing for tuberculosis
- C. RPR, VDRL Testing
- D. GC/Chlamydia Urine Testing

9. Answer C. RPR, VDRL Testing

- Syphilis transmission and drug use, particularly methamphetamine use, are intersecting epidemics
- Until 2013, the increase was primarily among MSM
- During 2013–2017, syphilis rate increased 72.7% nationally and 155.6% among **women**. Reported methamphetamine, injection drug, and heroin use increased substantially among women and heterosexual men with syphilis.

Cases

45,000

30,000

15,000

0

2016

2017

2018

2019

2020

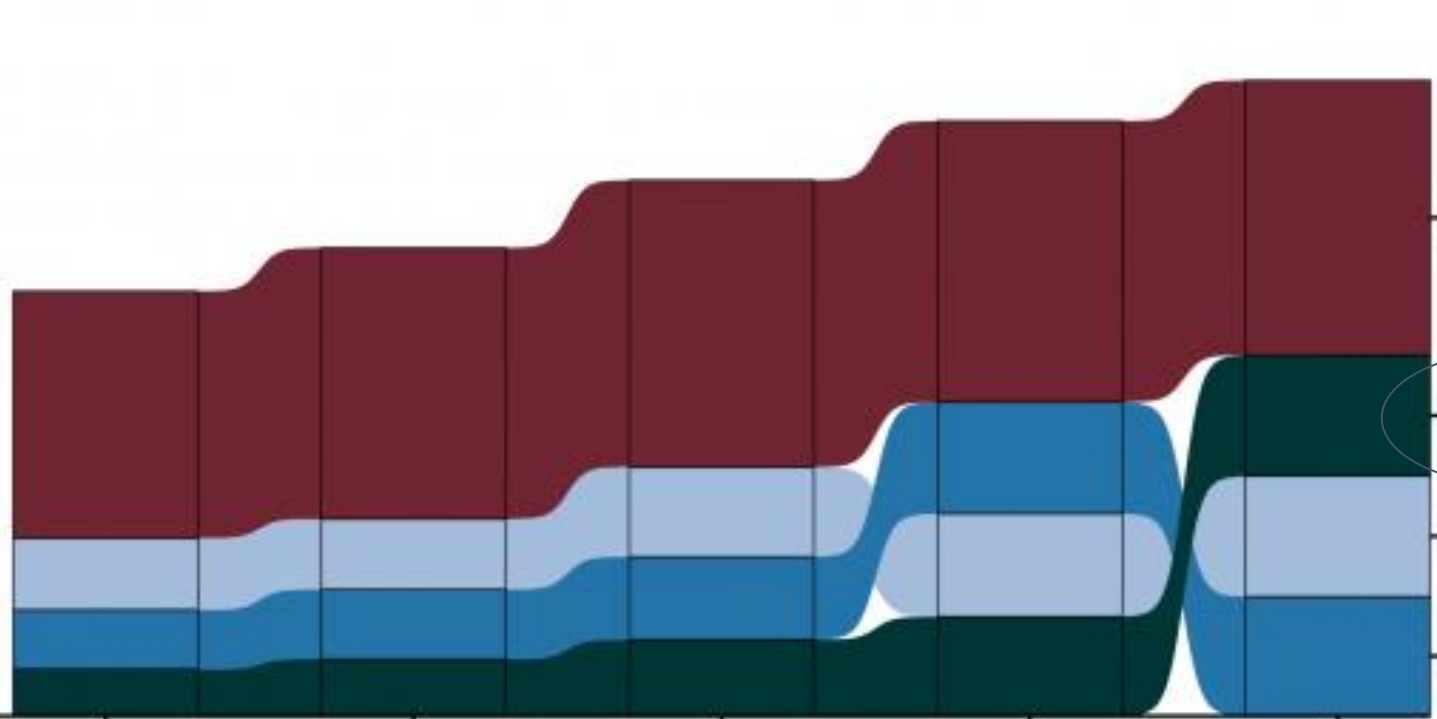
Year

MSM

Women

MSU

MSW





Source: Goldsmith LA, Katz SI, Gilchrist BA, Paller AS, Leffell DJ, Wolff K: *Fitzpatrick's Dermatology in General Medicine, 8th Edition*: www.accessmedicine.com

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The Stages of Syphilis

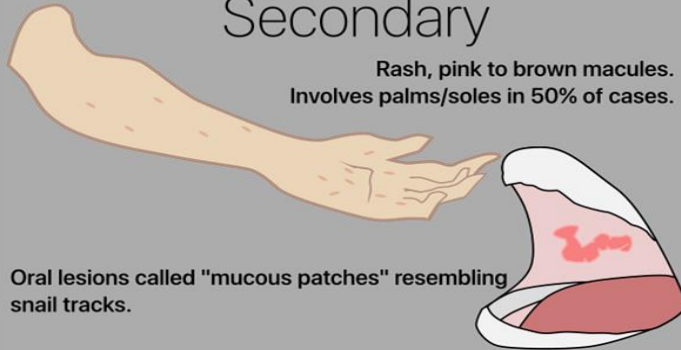
Primary



The chancre lesion is the hallmark of primary syphilis. It may appear 10-90 days after exposure. Common sites include penis and labia. Other sites include anus, oral mucosa. Without treatment, chancre disappears in 2-8 weeks.

Secondary

Rash, pink to brown macules. Involves palms/soles in 50% of cases.

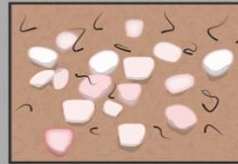
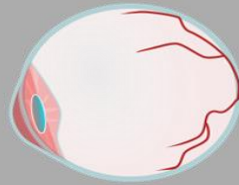


Oral lesions called "mucous patches" resembling snail tracks.



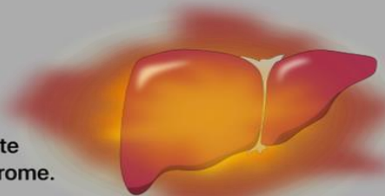
Ocular syphilis manifestations including anterior or posterior uveitis.

Symptomatic early neurosyphilis, cranial nerve deficits and/or aseptic meningitis presentation.



Genito-inguinal rashes, including tinea-mimicker or heaped-up wart-like lesions called condyloma lata.

Less common internal organ manifestations including acute hepatitis and nephrotic syndrome.



Latent

Latent syphilis refers to asymptomatic infection after the period of primary and secondary syphilis (noticed or unnoticed) has passed.

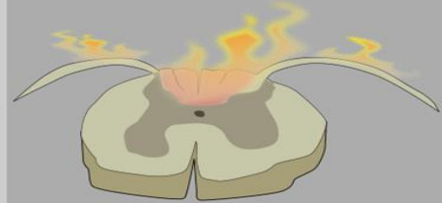
Early Latent

Early latent refers to asymptomatic patients with positive testing, in whom history can confirm exposure to or symptoms of primary or secondary syphilis within the last year. This group may receive single-dose penicillin like primary or secondary.

Late Latent

Late latent patients have positive serology but do not meet criteria for early. Thus, multiple doses of penicillin.

Late (Tertiary)



Late Neurosyphilis, including tabes dorsalis, gait impairments, and dementia. Tabes dorsalis damages the dorsal columns and sensory nerve roots, causing a syndrome of pain and sensory deficits similar to those of B12 deficiency.

Gumma are ulcerating granulomas on skin, bone, and internal organs.

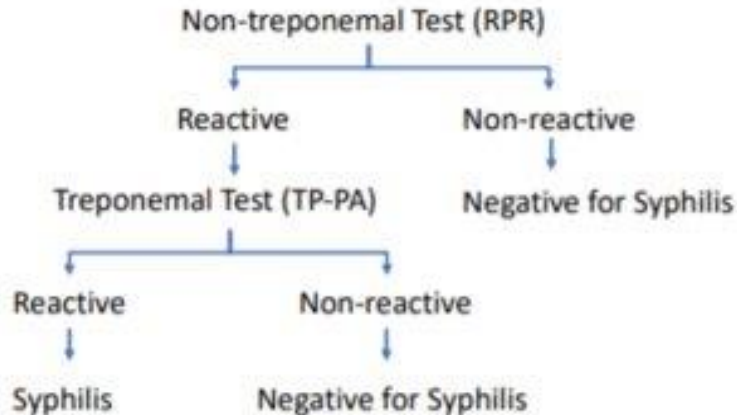


Cardiovascular effects of late syphilis include aortic aneurysm and coronary arteritis.

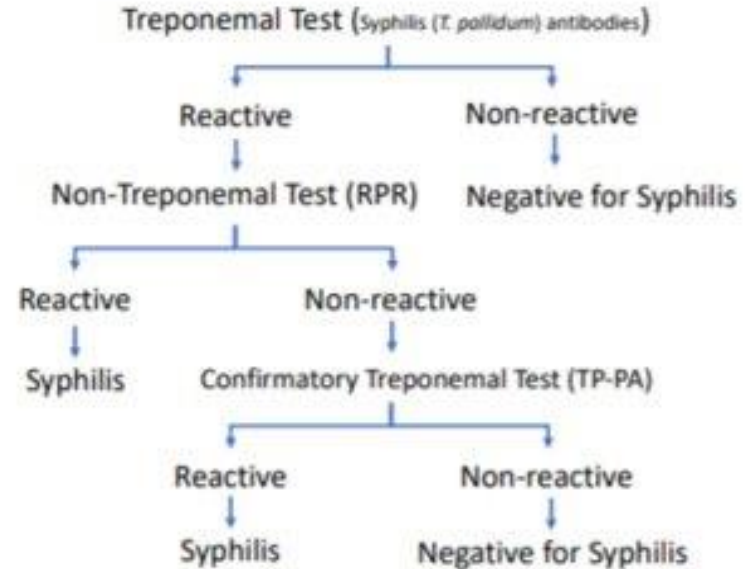
9. Answer C. RPR, VDRL Testing

Syphilis Screening Algorithms

Traditional Algorithm

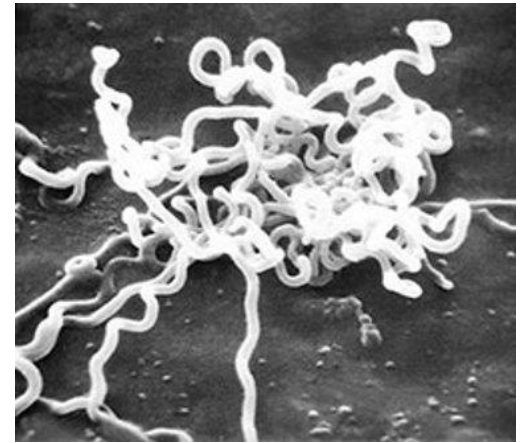


Reverse Algorithm



9. Answer C. RPR, VDRL Testing

- Latest generation treponemal serology assays allow highly sensitive and specific screening
- *Penicillin G* is used to treat all stages of syphilis. Initiate without lab confirmation in symptomatic patients or those who report a sexual exposure.
- **Obtain pregnancy test** in all women diagnosed with syphilis.
- **Test for other sexually transmitted infections** including HIV
- Offer *Pre and Post Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV*



Need to Know

1. Toxidromes (clinical symptoms & management)
2. Withdrawal syndromes (clinical symptoms & management)
3. Acid-Base disorders and electrolyte disturbances
4. Cardiovascular morbidity: ischemia, arrhythmia
5. Pulmonary morbidity: COPD, cancer
6. GI morbidity: hepatitis and cirrhosis
7. Infectious disease morbidity: Endocarditis, soft tissue infections, sexually transmitted infections
8. Common drug interaction concerns: serotonin syndrome, cytochrome P-450 enzyme inducer/inhibitors

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Atrial fibrillation burden significantly lower in abstinence group

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