

Continuing Medical Education (CME)

- Acute/Emergency Medical Conditions

Case History

A 48 year old woman, Mariam, comes to your clinic, complaining of acute shortness of breath. She is a known COPD patient, with several admissions to hospital in the past.

She has once been referred to a larger hospital as she required ventilation in intensive care. The history now is of 4 days of progressively increasing shortness of breath and greenish/yellow sputum.

Question 1

What will you look for in the examination?

(Answers are on the next page)

Case progression

Mariam is cyanosed, with a respiratory rate of 40, using accessory muscles and is very distressed. She has widespread wheeze throughout the chest with a few scattered crepitations. Her temperature is 99F. Her blood pressure is 100/60 and pulse is 120 regular.

Question 2

Which of the following factors, mentioned in the history and examination above, suggest a poor prognosis for this patient?

Patient's age - 48 years

Greenish/yellow sputum

Respiratory rate of 40

Cyanosis

Widespread wheeze

History of need for ventilation

BP 100/60

Question 3

What is your management strategy?