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?