

65 Intern De-escalation Training

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Introduction/Background: Emergency Department (ED) visits for patients presenting with agitation and mental health issues are common and increasing. Caring for the agitated patient offers many challenges in keeping the patient and staff safe while trying to obtain a meaningful history and exam in order to perform a medical screening exam. Missing or misdiagnosing a medical etiology of agitation can be life threatening. De-escalation training which helps facilitate the medical screening exam is not commonly taught in medical school.

Educational Objectives: Objectives of the Intern SIM de-escalation training included demonstrating:

- Safety in approaching and interviewing an agitated patient
- Effective verbal de-escalation technique(s)
- Appropriate pharmacologic interventions
- Understanding of and proper application of the psychiatric hold

Curricular Design: De-escalation training occurred during the first month of internship. Prior to the training, participants received articles on de-escalation techniques and pharmacologic choices for the agitated patient. A live actor played the role of an agitated psychiatric patient at the ED SIM center. Just prior to entering the SIM room, Interns reviewed the patient's triage note then entered the agitated patient's room. Focus was placed on safely interacting with the patient, use of verbal de-escalation techniques, appropriate pharmacologic interventions and correctly placing a psychiatric hold. After the scenario, the intern was debriefed by a Faculty observer.

Impact/Effectiveness: Evaluations of the training identified the case to be challenging and new content to many. The use of a live actor enhanced the realism of the experience and offered the chance to practice de-escalation techniques while in the safety of the SIM environment. Participants stated they were appreciative of a chance to make their "rookie" mistakes in SIM rather than doing so in the ED where they may have put the patient or themselves at risk.



Figure 1. De-escalation training session.