

It's Your Call - Solution

What is your first concern for this patient?

As always, airway management. While her lethargy could be caused by her fever or her low blood sugar, managing the airway, is always our first step in trying to correct an altered mental status as well as PVC's.

What could be causing her symptoms?

This patient presents with a lot of symptoms that can fit under the umbrella term "flu-like", and this rational can be quite dangerous for your patients. It is easy to write off fever, nausea and vomiting, and even hypotension as the flu. Hypoglycemia could explain the lethargy and the nausea, but not necessarily the fever or tachyarrhythmia. While this patient may now be in a hypoglycemic state, it may in fact be a symptom instead of the cause. It is in our patients medical history that we find clues that could lead us down a different path. Inconsistencies or overdosing medications can offer an array of results, and in this instance the patient's thyroid medication could raise a flag. Levothyroxine or also known by trade name Synthroid is an artificial thyroid hormone, that when overtaken, can produce hypermetabolic effects on the body: increased heart rate, hyperthermia (which can cause dehydration) and hypoglycemia which will have ultimate effects on the patient's mental status, and cardiac activity. This is what is known as a Thyrotic Crisis or Thyroid Storm.

How are you going to treat this patient?

- BLS: Supportive care: High flow O2 via non-rebreather or assist with ventilations should it become necessary, treat the hypoglycemia with oral glucose as long as the patient remains conscious. You can assist with trying to cool the patient down slowly. Transport in a position of comfort.
- ALS: BLS considerations. Establish IV access, and should give isotonic crystalloids. D50 or glucagon may be necessary for treating the hypoglycemia. Monitor cardiac activity, and treat changes in activity as per your standing orders. Consider Beta-blockers for treating tachyarrhythmias.

References:

1. Dalton, Limmer, Mistovich, Werman Advanced Medical Life Support. Brady: Upper Saddle River. 2007. p. 267-269.
2. Bledsoe, Porter, Cherry. Paramedic Care: Principles & Practice Vol. 3, Second Ed.. Brady. Upper Saddle River. 2006. p. 325-326.