

Chapter 2—The Well-Being of the EMT

Select the **BEST** answer to the following multiple-choice questions.

1. For the last few days, your regular EMT partner has been having trouble sleeping, has been on edge, and has trouble concentrating on his job during EMS calls. Luckily, your call volume has been low with no serious calls since the infant cardiac arrest you both worked last month. You ask him if anything is bothering him and he states he is fine in every way. He states that he has been going to the bars lately to relax and invites you to come along for some drinks after work. Choose the best answer for this situation.

- A. Your partner is suffering from acute stress reaction and you should recommend to him that he seek professional counseling.
- B. Your partner is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder and you should go to the bar with him to provide moral support and talk with him.
- C. Your partner is suffering from a delayed stress reaction and you should recommend that he seek professional counseling.
- D. Your partner is suffering from a cumulative stress reaction. This is a natural response and he should be fine in a few days.

Answer: C

Rationale:

The EMT is suffering from a delayed stress reaction because the incident occurred over a month prior. Drug and alcohol abuse is a common coping mechanism for a delayed stress mechanism, so any form of moral support that involves alcohol should be avoided. EMTs suffering from any type of stress reaction where they are having difficulty coping should seek professional counseling.

2. You have just worked a cardiac arrest call on a 48-year-old father of three. Despite your best efforts, the patient died in the emergency department. As you are getting your ambulance in service, the patient's wife rushes out of the emergency department. She finds you and begins screaming at you that her husband's death is your fault. She blames you for not getting on the scene fast enough, taking too long at the house, and not shocking her husband back to life like she has seen on television. What response should you have to her anger?

- A. Recognize that she is in the denial stage of grief and interrupt her hysterical behavior pattern by getting her attention and helping her calm down.
- B. Reassure her that you did everything you could and that everything will be okay.
- C. Correct her misconceptions and remind her that television shows are fiction, so she will not sue you in the future.
- D. Listen empathetically to all of her complaints and let her know she can contact you for any additional assistance.

Answer: D

Rationale:

The patient is in the anger stage of grief, not the denial stage. Her anger is part of the normal grieving process and should not be taken personally. EMTs should not offer false reassurance by telling the patient that everything will be okay. Correcting her misconceptions will not help the situation and may make it worse. Listening empathetically to her concerns and offering to help her as realistically as possible are the best actions to take when confronted by a person in the anger stage of grief.

3. You are first on the scene of a vehicle collision where a vehicle has gone off a bridge and is partially submerged. You are told that a person is still trapped in the vehicle. Your partner starts to take off his shoes and prepares to go in to save the victim. You stop your partner and tell him it is too dangerous. He tells you he is prepared to die to save a life. What is the best response to him?

- A. He is not only putting his life at risk, but also placing the lives of the professional rescuers unnecessarily at risk.
- B. His family will not receive any benefits if he is not trained in rescue and dies while attempting a rescue.
- C. The patient's family may sue him if he is not successful in rescuing him.
- D. He will force additional fire units to come to his aid unnecessarily and waste taxpayer money.

Answer: A

Rationale:

The life of the EMT and those who may be forced to rescue him take the highest priority. The financial benefits the EMT's family may or may not receive are not of importance. There is no guarantee as to whether the victim's family may or may not sue the EMT regardless of what he does. The fire units will be put out of service unnecessarily at a waste of money, but the life safety of the EMT and the professional rescuers is the first priority.

4. You are on the scene of a "sick case" call. The patient is a 26-year-old, 250-pound male patient who suddenly becomes violently angry. Everything you say to the patient only makes him angrier. Offended by your questions, he screams that he is going to "cut your tongue out" and hurries into the kitchen. What should you do?

- A. Radio for police and then calmly walk out of the house, being sure to take all of your medical equipment.
- B. Tackle the patient before he can get a kitchen knife to stab you.
- C. Radio for police and relay to dispatch important scene information until they arrive.
- D. Leave immediately to a safe area and then call for police assistance.

Answer: D

Rationale:

Whenever a patient becomes violent or threatens violence, the EMT should immediately leave the scene and call for police. The EMT should not re-enter the scene until it has been made safe by law enforcement. The EMT should not do anything that will slow down or impede his escape, such as taking the time to collect heavy medical equipment that will slow him down. The EMT should never stay on-scene in an attempt to calm down the violent patient or provide pertinent scene information to the police. This is a very dangerous situation and can result in serious injury or death. The EMT should also not try to fight the patient, as he is not trained in law enforcement techniques and the EMT can be seriously injured or killed as well.

5. You respond to a laceration call. When you arrive on-scene, you walk into the house and find a person suffering from a severe wrist laceration from a broken window. Without thinking, you immediately grab the wrist and apply direct pressure to the wound. You then realize that, in your hurry to save a life, you forgot to put on your gloves. You look down to see your hand is covered in blood. When practical, you immediately wash your hands thoroughly. What is your next best action?

- A. Report the exposure incident because it is the law and you could be fined a large sum of money for failing to report the exposure.
- B. Report the exposure so you can protect yourself from any accidental infection.
- C. Report the exposure. Failure to report the exposure may result in you not receiving financial compensation for a potential line-of-duty injury.
- D. If your hands had no open wounds, it is not required to report the exposure as there is no risk of infection, and you could get in trouble at work for failure to follow policy.

Answer: B

Rationale:

There is no law mandating that employees have to self-report any exposures. However, infection is still possible, even if a remote possibility, regardless of whether there was an open wound or not. Fear of discipline is never an acceptable reason for failing to report an exposure. Failure to report the exposure may prevent the EMT from obtaining financial compensation should an infection occur; however, the most important reason for reporting the exposure is to ensure the EMT's health and well-being. If necessary, a physician may prescribe antiviral medication, but those medications are effective only when administered within a strict time frame from initial exposure. Immediate reporting of any bloodborne pathogen exposure is critical to minimize any potential infection risk to the EMT.