

Behavioral Science Sample Items

13. A 46-year-old man comes to the physician for a follow-up examination. He underwent coronary artery bypass grafting 3 weeks ago. He works long hours daily as the head chef and owner of a restaurant. He has had a 14-kg (30-lb) weight gain since opening his restaurant 3 years ago. He attributes this weight gain to “working around food all day, every day.” He does not smoke cigarettes. His father had a myocardial infarction at the age of 60 years. The patient is 175 cm (5 ft 9 in) tall and now weighs 102 kg (225 lb); BMI is 33 kg/m². Physical examination shows no other abnormalities. He tells the physician that he is afraid to cut down on his work hours because his business might suffer as a result, but he says, “I don’t want to have a heart attack like my dad did.” Which of the following responses by the physician is most appropriate?
- (A) “The fact that you do not smoke cigarettes balances out your other risk factors, such as your weight and family history.”
 - (B) “Given your family history, modifying other risk factors won’t have much impact.”
 - (C) “I suggest you have someone else run your business for the time being, so you can spend your days in a more healthy environment.”
 - (D) “Let’s discuss some lifestyle changes, including weight loss, exercise, and decreased stress.”
 - (E) “Since the only risk factor for a myocardial infarction you can change is your weight, I suggest you initiate a weight-loss program fairly soon.”
14. A 40-year-old woman with hypertension comes to the physician for a follow-up examination. Her blood pressure is 160/96 mm Hg. She tells the physician that she has been having difficulty being compliant with her medication regimen and low-sodium diet. Which of the following responses by the physician is most appropriate?
- (A) “I will go over the regimen and diet again to make sure you understand them.”
 - (B) “I’d like you to read these pamphlets on the risks of hypertension. You will then realize the seriousness of your condition.”
 - (C) “If you don’t follow my recommendations, you could end up having a heart attack or stroke. You could also become blind.”
 - (D) “Tell me the difficulties you’ve been having. Perhaps we can make your regimen and diet easier for you to follow.”
 - (E) “Unfortunately, if you do not follow your medication regimen and diet, I will find it difficult to act as your physician.”
15. A 27-year-old woman comes to the physician because of an itchy rash on her hands for 2 weeks. She states that she began training as a hairstylist 3 weeks ago and works 6 hours daily, cutting, coloring, and highlighting hair and giving perms. Examination of the hands shows edema with weepy vesicular lesions in a glove pattern bilaterally. Which of the following initial actions by the physician is most appropriate?
- (A) Advise the patient to stop her training and look for another type of job
 - (B) Immediately irrigate the affected area with copious amounts of water and prescribe an anti-inflammatory ointment
 - (C) Inform the patient that her lesions are consistent with poison ivy dermatitis and determine when and where she was exposed
 - (D) Prescribe oral corticosteroid treatment and tell the patient to avoid giving perms since harsh chemicals are involved
 - (E) Prescribe topical corticosteroid treatment and advise the patient to wear non-latex gloves at work

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16. A 42-year-old man with mild intellectual developmental disorder comes to his primary care physician for a follow-up examination. The patient has received care from this physician for many years. He recently received the diagnosis of inoperable retroperitoneal sarcoma. His prognosis is poor. He serves as his own guardian and lives independently. His oncologist recommends chemotherapy that is highly toxic and has less than a 5% response rate for this type of tumor. The primary care physician believes that the burden of suffering clearly outweighs the limited potential benefit of this treatment. The patient says that he is unsure whether he wishes to undergo the chemotherapy. Which of the following is the most appropriate next step by the primary care physician?
- (A) Ask the patient what he understands about the treatment and its likely effects
 - (B) Contact the oncologist and request that he reconsider this treatment plan
 - (C) Emphasize the toxic adverse effects of the treatment and how uncomfortable the patient would be
 - (D) Encourage the patient to allow the primary care physician to decide what is best for him
 - (E) Stress the extremely low chance that treatment will provide any benefit to the patient
17. A 5-year-old boy with Down syndrome is admitted to the hospital because of a 1-month history of fatigue, intermittent fever, and weakness. Results from a peripheral blood smear taken during his evaluation are indicative of possible acute lymphoblastic leukemia. The physician recommends a bone marrow aspiration to confirm the diagnosis and subsequent cytogenetic studies as needed. The patient's parents refuse to consent to the procedure because they think such an invasive test will cause their son too much unnecessary pain. Without confirmation of the diagnosis and results from cytogenetic testing, the patient's treatment may be adversely affected. Which of the following is the most appropriate next step for the physician?
- (A) Accede to the parents' wishes to spare their son further pain
 - (B) Consult child protective services
 - (C) Discuss options to manage the potential pain during the procedure
 - (D) Do the necessary procedure despite the parents' objections
 - (E) Explain that the child will die if the procedure is refused
18. A 70-year-old man with terminal pancreatic cancer is admitted to the hospital because of severe shortness of breath. He has no documented advance care plans. His three children tell the physician that they want everything possible to be done for their father, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and intubation, if necessary. The patient is cachectic and unaware of his surroundings. Which of the following initial responses by the physician is most appropriate?
- (A) "I hear you, and I understand how difficult it must be for you to see your father ill. Let's talk more about the options."
 - (B) "I know that you are distressed about your father's illness, but you must accept that he will die soon."
 - (C) "I want you to reconsider your decision about CPR and intubation. Your father's prognosis is very poor."
 - (D) "Relatives in this type of situation feel distressed, and they want to prolong the life of their loved one unnecessarily."
 - (E) "You are just prolonging the inevitable. Your father is going to die."
19. A 32-year-old woman comes to the emergency department after taking 40 1-mg tablets of alprazolam. She says that her boyfriend threatened to leave her, and she feels "empty." She drinks several six-packs of beer weekly and uses cocaine daily. She has outbursts of rage whether or not she is intoxicated. Which of the following is the most likely personality disorder?
- (A) Antisocial
 - (B) Borderline
 - (C) Dependent
 - (D) Narcissistic

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20. A 34-year-old woman with major depressive disorder comes to the physician for a follow-up examination. She says that her depressive symptoms are worsening. Multiple medication regimens have been ineffective. The patient says that she spoke recently with a former college roommate who also has depression. Her friend is currently enrolled in a clinical trial for a new antidepressant at a local center. The patient says, "My friend seems to be doing really well with this new medication, and I think I'd like to try it out to see if it would work for me, too. Can you write me a referral to the center where my friend is enrolled?" Which of the following is the most appropriate initial response by the physician to this patient's request?
- (A) Decline to refer the patient because she has treatment-refractory depression that typically is not accepted into clinical trials
 - (B) Discuss the conduct of clinical trials so that the patient has a clear understanding of how they operate
 - (C) Inform the patient that she cannot receive future care from the physician if she enrolls in the clinical trial
 - (D) Inform the patient that she will not get the best care possible if she enrolls in an experimental trial
 - (E) Refer the patient to the center because so many other treatment options have failed

Answer Form for Behavioral Science Sample Questions

(Questions 1–20)

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Answer Key for Behavioral Science Sample Questions

(Questions 1–20)

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| 1. | D | 11. | C |
| 2. | E | 12. | A |
| 3. | E | 13. | D |
| 4. | C | 14. | D |
| 5. | D | 15. | E |
| 6. | D | 16. | A |
| 7. | E | 17. | C |
| 8. | A | 18. | A |
| 9. | A | 19. | B |
| 10. | C | 20. | B |