Discussion of the futility of further intervention in an Unsurvivable intracranial haemorrhage

Instructions to examiner

Objectives of the station – the candidate is able to communicate the futility of further medical intervention and the need to stop resuscitation

The candidate should be allowed to lead the discussion. You should not need to intervene at all. The actor should be briefed to be sensible but understandably emotional. There is an A&E record for the candidate to refer to and a scan if they wish to discuss it with the daughter. Between candidates, arrange the chairs so they have to make a choice to move closer

At the beginning of the station please give the candidate an introductory sentence – we suggest:

Explain to this lady that her mother has a non-survivable condition and explain that you intend to stop active treatment

Instructions for the candidate

You have been caring for an elderly (75) year old lady (Mrs Jones) who was found by her home help unconscious at home. The patient was GCS 3 on arrival, apnoeic, pulse 40, BP 220/110. You have intubated the patient and she is ventilated for the scan.

The CT shows a massive intracerebral bleed with midline shift and compressed ventricles. The neurosurgeons have confirmed there is an appalling prognosis and a 100% chance that the patient will die. There is no active treatment to be offered.

The daughter is present in the relatives' room within your department.

Task

Explain that further intervention is inappropriate and that there is no hope of recovery or indeed survival from the stroke. You need to reach an understanding with the daughter that you are going to cease resuscitation and active intervention and allow the patient to die naturally.

Examiner role- observer only

Instructions for the actor

Your mother has been brought in to hospital with a large stroke. You do not understand much about the condition but have asked to see the doctor. You think they may be withholding treatment because she is old or because there are not beds. You particularly want to clear this up – and ensure that the doctor is doing all they can

When the candidate first walks in you should raise this issue – gently at first – to say that the nurse has told you that the doctors are not going to do anything and you want to know why. You can say that you knew someone who had a bleed in the brain who made a full recovery and you know the brain surgeons can do wonderful things.

You make the point that she is normally completely independent, just because she is old, she should have treatment offered. You need to make sure that care is not being stopped because she is old, or there are no beds

You ask to see the scans, and ask if you don't understand what they are telling you.

Once the doctor has clarified this with you – that the decision not to do anything is related to how bad the condition is you need to make sure the doctor has made if clear to you

- She will not survive
- She will not be in any pain she has had some pain killers and will be able to have more if she needs them
- She is not conscious or able to talk but may know her daughter is there
- If you the daughter want to see your mother you can ask, only ask them if the candidate does not volunteer this information

If not offered, you should ask if a priest can come, if you can see her

Your mother has had

- High blood pressure in the past
- Diabetes (on tablets)
- A hysterectomy
- She is usually well, and independent, has home help to do the shopping but still gets out herself.

Medications are water tablets and aspirin and some diabetes tablets – "met" something

Mark sheet

Your name	Candidate name
	Candidate number

	Adequate	Inadequate/ not attempted
Asks if there is a nurse or other member of family/staff		
who can be present		
Checks her relationship and name		
Explains his/her role		
Checks what she knows already		
Explains clinical course so far		
Explains what CT shows		
Demonstrates CT		
Explicitly explains prognosis		
Checks understanding of condition and prognosis		
Uses words such as die and non survivable		
Does not indicate there is a choice		
Does not ask relative to decide		
Gives a suitable time period (days)		
Explains they will ensure no pain/distress		
Offers to ring others		
Offers to arrange for her to see mother		
Asks about help or support required		
Allows silence		
Uses appropriate body language		
Closes interview		
Global score (please refer to global score grid) Score out of 5		
Global score from role player (<i>please refer to global score grid</i>) Score out of 5		

For the purpose of	f standard setting:
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Overall subjective view Pass Fail