

CONFUSION ASSESSMENT METHOD (CAM)

Feature 1: Mental Status Change, Acute Onset Or Fluctuating Course

Definition: Change in mental status (inattention, disorientation, memory impairment, disorganized thinking, perceptual disturbance that was new or worse for this patient, usually over hours or days.)

- a) Is there evidence of an acute change in mental status from the patient's baseline? Ask the person caring for or living with the patient if they have noticed any behavior changes over past few days.
- b) Did the (abnormal) behavior fluctuate during the day, that is tend to come and go
- c) or increase and decrease in severity?

Questions to assess current mental status:

Tell me where you are (hospital, city, state)
What is the date, season, or current year
What is the reason for your staying here

Feature 2: Inattention

Definition: Reduced ability to maintain attention to external stimuli and to appropriately shift attention to new external stimuli. Patient seems unaware or out of touch with environment

- a) Did the patient have difficulty focusing their attention, for example, being easily distractible or having difficulty keeping track of what was being said?

Tests for **Inattention** include: (any one of these tests may be used)

"Repeat these numbers: 5-9-2" Instruct the patient. "Now repeat them backwards".

"Spell the word world, W-O-R-L-D" Instruct the patient. "Now spell **world** backwards"

"Count backwards from the number 20".

Feature 3: Disorganized Thinking

Definition: Disorganized thinking, is indicated by rambling, irrelevant or incoherent speech.

Was the patient's thinking disorganized or incoherent, unclear or illogical flow of ideas, or unpredictable switching from subject to subject?

Feature 4: Altered Level Of Consciousness

Definition: Any state of consciousness other than alert.

Is the level of consciousness altered?

Alert (normal)
Vigilant (hyperalert, startled easily)
Lethargic (drowsy, easily aroused)
Stupor (difficult to arouse)
Coma (unable to arouse)

**CAM Positive = Feature 1 and 2
must be present (Yes to both questions)
With Either Feature 3 or 4 Present**

Inouye, S., van Dyck, C., Alessi, C., Balkin, S., Siegel, A. & Horwitz, R. (1990). Clarifying confusion: The confusion assessment method. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 113(12), 941-948