

The Confusion Assessment Method (CAM) Diagnostic Algorithm

Consider the diagnosis of delirium if 1 and 2, AND either 3a or 3b are positive:

1. Acute Onset and Fluctuating Course

Is there evidence of an acute change in mental status from the patient's baseline?

Did the (abnormal) behavior fluctuate during the day (tend to come and go, or increase and decrease in severity)?

2. Inattention

Did the patient have difficulty focusing attention (e.g. being easily distractible) or have difficulty keeping track of what was being said?

3a. Disorganized Thinking

Was the patient's thinking disorganized or incoherent: such as rambling or irrelevant conversation, unclear or illogical flow of ideas, or unpredictable switching from subject to subject?

3b. Altered Level of Consciousness

Overall, how would you rate this patient's level of consciousness? (alert [normal], vigilant [hyper-alert], lethargic [drowsy, easily aroused], stupor [difficult to arouse], or coma [un-arousable]). *Positive for any answer other than "alert".*

Sensitivity: 94%-100%; Specificity: 90%-95%

Ref: Inouye, SK et al Annals Int Med 1990;113:941-48

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