

# “Tell me about this patient”... A Template for Case Study Analysis

Asking your PTA student to review/analyze a patient’s initial PT evaluation is an excellent activity for facilitating critical thinking and identifying areas of weakness. Consider prompting the student through either verbal quizzing *or a “homework assignment”* to respond to some of the questions in this template. You might also consider thinking/talking out loud about these questions as you discuss a new patient with the student to role-model putting all of the pieces together.

## Patient’s Diagnosis/Pathology

- What are the expected *signs & symptoms* of this diagnosis?
- What’s the typical *mechanism of injury*?
- What medical *diagnostic tests* would be used to identify this condition?
- What physical therapy *evaluative tests* would be used to diagnose the condition?
- What might the *medical (surgical, pharmacological) management* of the condition include?
- Is this diagnosis an *indication, contraindication, or precaution* for any particular interventions?



## Patient’s Past Medical History and Medical Tests

- Are any of the conditions in the patient’s past medical history or current medical tests/measures (lab values, imaging, etc..) a consideration in terms of selecting interventions?
- How might the patient’s past medical history or current medical tests/measures affect his *prognosis or progression* toward goals?
- What are the *normal/expected values* (as compared to the patient’s) for this particular medical test?

## Subjective

- Are any of the patient’s subjective statements particularly consistent with (or inconsistent with) his/her diagnosis? With objective findings? With the established goals? With items in the Plan of care?
- What’s the implication for this particular subjective statement? How would/should you interpret the comment?
- Are there any *discharge planning* considerations prompted by the patient’s subjective statements?

## Objective Assessments/Examination Findings:

- Connect the dots.... Which objective tests/measures support (are consistent with) the patient’s diagnosis/pathology? Which support the presence of the established goals? Which correlate with particular items in the POC?
- Are there objective findings that are particular indications (or contraindications) for any interventions?
- Why did the PT select this/these particular tests and measures? What in the history or subjective report led the PT to choose that assessment? What is the test/measure designed to identify?
- What is the “normal” value for that test/measure as compared to the patient’s?
- What particular *anatomic structure* (muscle, ligament, capsule, peripheral nerve, etc..) is/would affect that test or measure?
- Is this a test/measure that a PTA would typically continue to *re-assess on a regular basis*? Why or why not?

- Would you expect this objective finding to change/improve throughout the course of this episode of care? Why or why not?
- What *functional activities/ADLs* would be affected by the impairment identified by this test/measure? Would modifying the environment or technique for performing the ADL allow the task to occur more easily?
  - Based upon the history, subjective reports, and objective findings, do you think this patient’s injury/healing is in the *acute, subacute, or chronic stage*?

## PT Evaluation/Assessment

- What particular findings in the examination and tests/measures do you think the PT referenced when developing their “PT diagnosis”/Assessment?
- What factors influenced the PT’s evaluation of the patient’s rehab potential/prognosis? Are there resources available for addressing/improving any of those factors?
- In comparing 2 patients in the caseload with similar medical diagnoses, why does this patient have a better/worse rehab potential/anticipated outcome?

## Goals

- Connect the dots... what findings in the initial examination support the presence of each goal? What items in the plan of care are intended to specifically address each goal?
- Brainstorm a variety of interventions (aside from just those specifically listed in the POC) that might be used to address Goal # \_\_\_\_\_. Why would those interventions be appropriate?
- Identify some interventions that would be *inappropriate* for addressing Goal # \_\_\_\_\_. Why would those interventions be inappropriate?
- What interim tests/measures could be taken to track patient progress toward Goal # \_\_\_\_\_?

## Plan of Care

- Give a *rationale* for each item listed in the POC.
- Identify any *precautions or contraindications* for items listed in the POC.
- *Prioritize* items in the POC in order of importance for this treatment session.
- Discuss the appropriate *sequencing* of items in the POC for this treatment session.
- Will communication with other members of the health-care team be necessary/important in the implementation of this POC?
- Are there modifications to the POC that you anticipate the PT will need to make as this patient progresses?

Discussing (and asking your student to discuss) some of these questions as you review the PT evaluation will help them see and appreciate the process of critical thinking in the clinical environment. It might also help you (as the clinician) recall the rationale for decisions you make on a daily basis that have become almost second-nature and automatic.