

Code Green in action

A Code Green is called and the team leader arrives from the IMCU to find several nurses caring for a confused patient. The patient has fallen and several nurses are supporting him while attempting to reorient him and help him sit down. The patient is swinging at the staff and exhibits signs of delirium and an inability to focus or understand instructions.

The staff is frustrated and concerned about the safety of the patient and themselves. As the situation continues to escalate, the team leader observes the patient and collects a quick history, which leads her to suspect anticholinergic syndrome. The patient's medication history shows two antipsychotic medications with anticholinergic properties. The team leader discusses the findings with the resident physician at the bedside and suggests a toxicology consult for possible treatment with physostigmine. She quickly contacts the toxicologist, who confirms the validity of the assessment and orders the needed reversal. Within 5 minutes of administering the physostigmine, the patient becomes oriented, appropriate, and cooperative.

The patient is transferred to the IMCU for further observation and possible continued treatment with physostigmine, which requires close monitoring. The Code Green is cleared by the team leader, and she debriefs the staff.