ABSTRACT:

**Audience:** This scenario was developed to educate emergency medicine residents on the diagnosis and management of a pediatric patient with toxic shock syndrome. The case is also appropriate for teaching of medical students and advanced practice providers, as well as a review of the principles of crisis resource management, teamwork, and communication.

**Introduction:** Toxic shock syndrome is a low-frequency, high-acuity scenario requiring timely identification and aggressive management. If patients suffering from this condition are managed incorrectly, they may progress into multi-organ dysfunction and potentially death. Toxic shock syndrome has been associated with Streptococcus and *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staph). Approximately half of Staph cases are associated with menstruation, which was first described in the 1970s-1980s and was associated with the use of absorbent tampons.¹ Group A streptococcus may cause complications such as necrotizing fasciitis and gangrenous myositis.² Pediatric patients may present critically ill from toxic shock syndrome. Providers need to perform a thorough history and physical exam to discern the source of infection. Management requires aggressive care with antibiotics and intravenous (IV) fluids.

**Objectives:** By the end of this simulation session, the learner will be able to: 1) Recognize toxic shock syndrome. 2) Review the importance of a thorough physical exam. 3) Discuss management of toxic shock syndrome, including supportive care and the difference in antibiotic choices for streptococcal and staphylococcal toxic shock syndrome. 4) Appropriately disposition a patient suffering from toxic shock syndrome. 5) Communicate effectively with team members and nursing staff during a resuscitation of a critically ill patient.

**Method:** This session was conducted using high-fidelity simulation, followed by a debriefing session and lecture on toxic shock syndrome.

**Topics:** Medical simulation, pediatrics, toxic shock syndrome, sepsis, pediatric sepsis.
By working through the case learners will learn to recognize toxic shock syndrome through history and physical exam (objective 1 and 2), manage the patient (objective 3) and appropriately disposition the patient (objective 4) while effectively communicating with the team (objective 5). After the case, these points can be reiterated during debriefing and any points of confusion or errors clarified. This simulation scenario allows learners to rehearse their toxic shock syndrome management skills in a safe learning environment, then receive summative feedback and discuss treatment strategies with their peers and content experts.

**Recommended pre-reading for instructor:**
- We recommend that instructors review literature regarding the diagnosis and management of toxic shock syndrome. Suggested reading includes the materials listed below under “References/suggestions for further reading.”

**Results and tips for successful implementation:**
This simulation was written to be performed as a high-fidelity simulation scenario, but may also be used as a mock oral board case. The scenario was based on an actual patient case.

If participants do not ask about tampon use or if they fail to perform a urogenital exam, the confederate nurse should tell participants that the patient hasn’t urinated all day. The nurse should then ask for a Foley catheter or straight catheterization. Nursing should begin catheterization, then tell participants that the patient asked if she needed to take out her tampon for a catheter. This should prompt the participants to perform a urogenital exam.

**References/suggestions for further reading:**
Case Title: Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome Case Scenario

Case Description & Diagnosis (short synopsis): 13-year-old girl presents with a day of malaise. She reports fevers, malaise, headache, myalgias, presyncope, rash, and nausea secondary to toxic shock syndrome from a retained tampon. The goal is early recognition and management.

Equipment or Props Needed:
High-fidelity pediatric simulation mannequin
Moulage material for mannequin for rash
- Commercial moulage kits are available. Cream-based cosmetic blush may also be used.
Angiocatheters (20g, 22g, 24g)
Oxygen (Nasal cannula, face mask, non-rebreather mask)
Cardiac monitor
Pulse oximetry
Bag-valve mask
Intravenous (IV) pole
Foley catheter
Tampon for insertion into mannequin
Broselow equipment
Normal saline (1L, 500cc, 250cc)
Medications = IV clindamycin, IV vancomycin, IV linezolid, IV nafcillin

Confederates needed:
Primary nurse, dad or mom

Stimulus Inventory:
#1 Complete blood count (CBC)
#2 Basic metabolic panel (BMP)
#3 beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) qualitative
#4 Prothrombin time (PT)/international normalized ratio (INR)
#5 Liver function tests (LFTs)
#6 Arterial blood gas (ABG)
#7 Lactate
#8 Urinalysis (UA)
#9 Chest X-Ray (CXR)
#10 Electrocardiogram (ECG) 1 – sinus tachycardia

INSTRUCTOR MATERIALS

#11  Skin Exam
#12  ECG 2 – normal sinus

**Background and brief information:** Parent brings patient into small community emergency department by private vehicle.

**Initial presentation:** That patient is placed in a bed after being triaged. She complains of significant abdominal pain.

**How the scenario unfolds:** A 13-year-old girl presents with her mom for a day of malaise. She reports fevers, malaise, headache, myalgias, presyncope, and nausea. She’s had four episodes of non-bloody emesis and loose stools without hematochezia or melena. She’s been eating, drinking, and urinating less.

- If asked: No one else at home is sick. No recent travel. She is up to date on immunizations. Her rash began this morning.
- If asked: last menstrual period (LMP) began four days ago.
  - If specifically asked: She last took her tampon out three days ago.
- Past medical history: asthma
- Past surgical history: none
- Immunizations are up to date
- Medications: albuterol as needed for shortness of breath
- Allergies: no known drug allergies
- Family history: noncontributory
- Vital signs:
  - Heart Rate (HR) – 140
  - Respiratory rate (RR) – 20
  - Temperature (T) – 102°F
  - Blood Pressure (BP) – 84/66
  - Pulse oximetry (O₂ sat) – 98% on room air (RA)
- Weight: 50 kg

Assessment: Appears toxic, lying in bed quietly. Conjunctiva and oropharyngeal membranes are erythematous but dry. Heart tachycardic, no murmur, 4-5 second capillary refill. Mild tachypnea at rest. Lungs clear to auscultation bilaterally. Abdomen soft, mildly generally tender to palpation (especially suprapubic region) without guarding, rebound, distention, or rigidity. Skin dry with rash. There is hyperemia of vaginal mucosa. If pelvic exam is performed, tampon is found. Mild vaginal bleeding is present, consistent with period. No cervical motion.

tenderness or tenderness/fullness on bimanual. Glasgow coma score (GCS) is 14 (E3V5M6). No focal motor or sensory deficits.

How the scenario unfolds: Patient should be given IV fluid until her blood pressure and heart rate improve, obtain blood and urine cultures, start antibiotics, and admit to the pediatric intensive care unit.

- If patient does not receive 3L of normal saline, she will remain hypotensive and tachycardic.
- If patient is not asked about a tampon or have a genitourinary exam performed, nurses will ask for a straight catheter or Foley catheter to obtain urine sample; then the nurse will report that the patient asked if she needs to remove her tampon for the catheter.

Critical Actions:

1. Intravenous access x 2
2. Continuous cardiac monitoring started
3. Administer 3L normal saline bolus
4. Order blood and urine cultures
5. Check hCG quantitative
6. Diagnose toxic shock syndrome
7. Start broad spectrum antibiotics
8. Reassessment of the patient’s clinical status and vital signs
9. Admit to pediatric intensive care unit

Case title: Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome Case Scenario

Chief Complaint: 13-year-old girl presents with a day of malaise. She reports fevers, malaise, headache, myalgias, presyncope, and nausea.

Vitals: HR 140  BP 84/66  RR 20  Temp 102.0  O2Sat 98% on room air

General Appearance: Appears toxic, lying supine in bed

Primary Survey:
- Airway: intact
- Breathing: mild tachypneic at rest, clear to auscultation bilaterally
- Circulation: tachycardic, 2+ symmetric pulses, cap refill 4-5 seconds

History:
- History of present illness: 13-year-old girl presents with a day of malaise. She reports fevers, malaise, headache, myalgias, presyncope, and nausea. She’s had four episodes of non-bloody emesis and loose stools without hematochezia or melena. She’s been eating, drinking, and urinating less.
  - If asked: No one else at home is sick. No recent travel. She is up to date on immunizations. Her rash began this morning.
  - If asked: LMP began four days ago.
    - If specifically asked: She last took her tampon out three days ago.
- Past medical history: asthma
- Past surgical history: none
- Patients medications: albuterol metered dose inhaler
- Allergies: No known drug allergies
- Social history: no smoking, drugs, alcohol.
- Immunizations: up to date
- Family history: non-contributory

Secondary Survey/Physical Examination:
- General appearance: appears toxic, lying supine in bed
- Head, ears, eyes, nose and throat (HEENT):
  - Head: within normal limits
  - Eyes: conjunctival membranes are injected (needs to ask)
INSTRUCTOR MATERIALS

- **Ears:** within normal limits
- **Nose:** within normal limits
- **Throat:** oropharyngeal membranes are erythematous, dry. (needs to ask)
- **Neck:** within normal limits
- **Heart:** tachycardic, no murmur (needs to ask about murmur), cap refill 4-5 seconds
- **Lungs:** mild tachypnea at rest without accessory muscle use.
- **Abdominal/GI:** soft, mildly generally tender to palpation, especially suprapubic region. No guarding, rebound, distention, rigidity. Normal bowel sounds. No signs of trauma (needs to ask)
- **Genitourinary:** hyperemia of vaginal mucosa. If pelvic performed, tampon is found. Mild vaginal bleeding consistent with period. No cervical motion tenderness or tenderness/fullness on bimanual (needs to ask)
- **Rectal:** within normal limits
- **Extremities:** within normal limits
- **Back:** within normal limits
- **Neuro:** GSC 14 (E3V5M6). No focal motor/sensory deficits
- **Skin:** diffuse macular erythema without vesicles, bullae, target lesions, petechiae, or purpura. Negative Nikolsky sign
- **Lymph:** within normal limits
- **Psych:** within normal limits
**Results:**

**CBC**
- WBC: 19.0 x1000/mm\(^3\)(H)
- HGB: 13.5g/dL
- HCT: 37.0%
- PLT: 190 x1000/mm\(^3\) (H)
- Segs: 81% (H)
- Bands: 16% (H)

**BMP**
- Na: 133 mEq/L
- Cl: 99 mEq/L
- K: 4.2 mEq/L
- HCO\(_3\): 16 mEq/L (L)
- BUN: 80 mg/dL (H)
- Cr: 2.8 mg/dL (H)
- Glucose: 100 mg/dL
- Calcium: 8.0 mg/dL

**hCG qualitative:**
- negative

**PT/INR**
- 12 seconds / 1.0

**Liver Function Tests**
- Total bilirubin: 0.8 mg/dL
- Direct bilirubin: 0.2 mg/dL
- Albumin: 3.0 g/dL
- Alkaline Phosphate: 100 U/L
- Total Protein: 7 g/dL

**ABG**
- pH: 7.29 (L)
- pCO\(_2\): 32 mm Hg (L)
- pO\(_2\): 89 mm Hg
INSTRUCTOR MATERIALS

HCO$_3$  16 mEq (L)
O2 sat  98%

*Lactate*
4.2 mEq/L (H)

*Urinalysis*
Leukocyte esterase: negative
Nitrites: negative
Blood: none
Ketones: trace
Glucose: none
Color: dark yellow
WBC: 10-15 WBCs/HPF
RBC: 0-5 RBCs/HPF
Squamous epithelial cells: 0-5 cells/HPF
Specific gravity: 1.025

*CXR (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Stillwaterising, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chest_Xray_PA_3-8-2010.png)*

**ECG 1 – sinus tachycardia** *(Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Glenlarson, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:12_lead_sinus_tachycardia_young.JPG)*

![ECG Image](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:12_lead_sinus_tachycardia_young.JPG)

**Skin Exam** *(Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Cross_Reaction_Rash.jpg: Matibot, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cross_Reaction_Rash_cropped.jpg)*

![Skin Exam Image](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cross_Reaction_Rash_cropped.jpg)
INSTRUCTOR MATERIALS

ECG 2 – normal sinus (Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Glenlarson, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:12_lead_generated_sinus_rhythm.JPG)
# OPERATOR MATERIALS

## SIMULATION EVENTS TABLE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute (state)</th>
<th>Participant action/ trigger</th>
<th>Patient status (simulator response) &amp; operator prompts</th>
<th>Monitor display (vital signs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 0:00 (Baseline) | Patient just placed into bed in ED | If patient is given 2L of fluid, go to State A  
If 3L of fluid given, go to State B  
If no fluids given, go to State C  
If Tylenol is given, drop temp to 100F | T 102F  
HR 140  
BP 84/66  
RR 20  
O2sat 98% RA |
| 4:00 State A | IV placed, labs drawn, 2L fluids given | State A: If 2L, tachycardia and hypotension will improve, but not resolve  
If an additional 1L of fluids given go to State B | T 102F  
HR 115  
BP 90/70  
RR 18  
O2sat 98% RA |
| 4:00 State B 7:00 State B | IV placed, labs drawn, total 3L fluids given | State B: If performed correctly, tachycardia and hypotension will improve further  
If not performed correctly, patient’s vitals will remain unchanged from state A  
If 3L of fluids and antibiotics are ordered go to State D | T 102F  
HR 108  
BP 98/78  
RR 16  
O2sat 98% RA |
| 4:00 State C | IV placed, labs drawn, no fluids given | State C: If not performed correctly, patient will become hypotensive to 70/palp, tachycardic to 150, and will require intubation (GCS 8, E2V2M4)  
If 2L of fluids are given go to State A, if 3L of fluids are given go to State B | T 102F  
HR 150  
BP 70/palp  
RR 22  
O2sat 98% RA  
GCS 8 (E2V2M4) |
| 7:00 State C | Patient intubated | If no fluids given patients will become more tachycardic and hypotensive, nurse will ask “should we give fluids?”  
If 2L of fluids are given go to State A, if 3L of fluids are given go to State B | T 102F  
HR 170  
BP 50/palp  
RR 22  
O2sat 98% RA  
GCS 8 (E2V2M4) |
| 7:00 State D | IV fluid bolus and antibiotics are given, PICU admission | If 3L of fluids and antibiotics are given, PICU will admit the patient.  
If not performed, nursing should ask “is there anything else we can do for her?” and go to 7:00 State C | T 102F  
HR 108  
BP 98/78  
RR 16  
O2sat 98% RA |

https://doi.org/10.21980/J8WK8J
**Operational Materials**

**Diagnosis:**
Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome

**Disposition:**
Pediatric Intensive Care Unit

DEBRIEFING AND EVALUATION PEARLS

Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome

Pearls:
Patients with toxic shock syndrome may present acutely ill and decompensate quickly, requiring aggressive management.

Providers should always evaluate for inciting events for sepsis, including retained tampons and pelvic inflammatory disease in women.

Staph aureus and Group A Strep create an exotoxin which may activate large numbers of T cells at once, resulting in massive cytokine production and release.

Skin manifestations may take different forms. There may be a diffuse red macular rash that involves the hands and soles, which may be subtle and resolve within a short time frame. There may also be hyperemia of mucosa, and in severe cases, superficial ulcerations of the mucus membranes. Late-onset skin manifestations have also been described approximately 1-2 weeks after the illness develops, with desquamation of the palms and soles.

Patients require anti-staphylococcal antibiotic coverage, such as clindamycin and vancomycin.

Other debriefing points:
Closed-loop communication amongst team: was it used? Why or why not? Were there any implications of this during case execution?
Was the Broselow tape used? Why or why not?

DEBRIEFING AND EVALUATION PEARLS

Toxic Shock Syndrome Management Pearls Handout

Microbiology
- Classically due to *S. aureus* or group A Strep (*Streptococcus pyogenes*), which are gram positive bacteria that produce exotoxins that promote cytokine expression for a proinflammatory state
- Toxic shock syndrome (TSS) linked to menstruation is linked to Staph
- Non-menstrual TSS risk factors include female barrier contraceptives and nasal packing material
- Strep is associated with necrotizing fasciitis and myositis. Groups B, C, and G are now being linked to TSS. Cases of group A strep have been reported with increased frequency, predominately in North America and Europe
- Staph TSS mortality is <3%, however, Strep TSS has a mortality rate of 30-70%
- Staph infections may be secondary only to colonization, while Strep often has an identifiable infectious source

Signs and Symptoms
- Patients may initially have a nonspecific prodrome, including fever, chills, headache, sore throat, vomiting, abdominal pain
- Subsequent hypotension results from systemic vasodilation
- The classic erythroderma is a painless diffuse red macular rash, which may be patchy or confluent. Patients may have desquamation of the palms and soles 1-3 weeks after initial symptom onset
  - Mucosal involvement includes oropharyngeal hyperemia and ulceration. For those with menstrual TSS, a pelvic exam may reveal vaginal mucosal involvement
- Patient with surgical wounds may not have associated erythema, induration, or drainage, and they should be considered a potential source of TSS
- Patients with Group A Strep have pain that precedes physical findings of infection, such as erythema

Diagnosis
- TSS is a clinical diagnosis
- Order labs to evaluate for organ hypoperfusion/dysfunction
- Blood cultures should be obtained, but positive blood cultures are uncommon in Staph TSS. 60% positive in Strep.

DEBRIEving AND EVALUATION PEARLS

- Wound, mucosal, and retained foreign material cultures are often positive for *S. aureus*

**Complications**

- May include acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), gangrene, disseminated intravascular coagulation, and renal failure
- Less common complications: rhabdomyolysis, seizures, pancreatitis, pericarditis, and cardiomyopathy

**Management**

- Aggressive IV fluid resuscitation
- Supplemental oxygen
- Remove retained foreign bodies
- Surgical consult for debridement of potentially infected wounds
- Empiric Staph antibiotic therapy: Vancomycin or linezolid if *methicillin resistant S. aureus* is prevalent. Otherwise, may consider oxacillin
  - Add Clindamycin to inhibit protein synthesis and toxin production
- Empiric Strep antibiotic therapy: meropenem and piperacillin/tazobactam. Add Vancomycin if MRSA is prevalent in the community
  - Add Clindamycin for same reasons as aforementioned

**References**


**Assessment Timeline**
This timeline is to help observers assess their learners. It allows observer to make notes on when learners performed various tasks, which can help guide debriefing discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Actions</th>
<th>0:00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. IV access x2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Continuous cardiac monitoring started</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Administer 3L normal saline bolus</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Order blood and urine cultures</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Check hCG quantitative</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Diagnosis toxic shock syndrome</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Start broad spectrum antibiotics</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Reassessment of the patient’s clinical status and vital signs</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Admit to pediatric intensive care unit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SIMULATION ASSESSMENT
Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome Case Scenario

Learner: ________________________________

Critical Actions:
☐ Intravenous access x 2
☐ Continuous cardiac monitoring started
☐ Administer 3L normal saline bolus
☐ Order blood and urine cultures
☐ Check hCG quantitative
☐ Diagnose toxic shock syndrome
☐ Start broad spectrum antibiotics
☐ Reassessment of the patient’s clinical status and vital signs
☐ Admit to pediatric intensive care unit

Summative and formative comments:

Milestones assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Did not achieve level 1</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Emergency Stabilization (PC1)</td>
<td>☐ Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>Recognizes abnormal vital signs</td>
<td>Recognizes an unstable patient, requiring intervention</td>
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<td>Performs primary assessment</td>
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<td>Discerns data to formulate a diagnostic impression/plan</td>
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<td>Manages and prioritizes critical actions in a critically ill patient</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Reassesses after implementing a stabilizing intervention</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Did not achieve level 1</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Performance of focused history and physical (PC2)</td>
<td>Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>Performs a reliable, comprehensive history and physical exam</td>
<td>Performs and communicates a focused history and physical exam based on chief complaint and urgent issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Diagnostic studies (PC3)</td>
<td>Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>Determines the necessity of diagnostic studies</td>
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<td>Prioritizes essential testing</td>
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<td>Orders appropriate diagnostic studies.</td>
<td>Interprets results of diagnostic studies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Performs appropriate bedside diagnostic studies/procedures</td>
<td>Reviews risks, benefits, contraindications, and alternatives to a diagnostic study or procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Diagnosis (PC4)</td>
<td>Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>Considers a list of potential diagnoses</td>
<td>Considers an appropriate list of potential diagnosis</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May or may not make correct diagnosis</td>
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<td>Considers other potential diagnoses, avoiding premature closure</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pharmacotherapy (PC5)</td>
<td>Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>Asks patient for drug allergies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Selects an medication for therapeutic intervention, consider potential adverse effects</td>
<td>Selects the most appropriate medication and understands mechanism of action, effect, and potential side effects</td>
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<td>Considers and recognizes drug-drug interactions</td>
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</table>

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## SIMULATION ASSESSMENT

**Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome Case Scenario**

Learner: __________________________________________

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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Observation and reassessment (PC6)</strong></td>
<td>□ Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>□ Reevaluates patient at least one time during case</td>
<td>□ Reevaluates patient after most therapeutic interventions</td>
<td>□ Consistently evaluates the effectiveness of therapies at appropriate intervals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disposition (PC7)</strong></td>
<td>□ Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>□ Appropriately selects whether to admit or discharge the patient</td>
<td>□ Appropriately selects whether to admit or discharge</td>
<td>□ Educates the patient appropriately about their disposition</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>General Approach to Procedures (PC9)</strong></td>
<td>□ Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>□ Identifies pertinent anatomy and physiology for a procedure</td>
<td>□ Obtains informed consent</td>
<td>□ Determines a back-up strategy if initial attempts are unsuccessful</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Values (PROF1)</strong></td>
<td>□ Did not achieve Level 1</td>
<td>□ Demonstrates caring, honest behavior</td>
<td>□ Exhibits compassion, respect, sensitivity and responsiveness</td>
<td>□ Develops alternative care plans when patients’ personal beliefs and decisions preclude standard care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# SIMULATION ASSESSMENT

**Pediatric Toxic Shock Syndrome Case Scenario**

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<th>Level 1</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Patient centered communication (ICS1)</td>
<td>Did not achieve level 1</td>
<td>Establishes rapport and demonstrates empathy to patient (and family)</td>
<td>Elicits patient’s reason for seeking health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Team management (ICS2)</td>
<td>Did not achieve level 1</td>
<td>Recognizes other members of the patient care team during case (nurse, techs)</td>
<td>Communicates pertinent information to other healthcare colleagues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>